



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)

Annual report 2019





FC 175

# Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)

Annual report 2019

## REQUIRED CITATION

FAO. 2020. *Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) – Annual report 2019*. Rome.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

©FAO, 2020



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons license. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: “This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the authoritative edition.”

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

Cover photo: ©FAO/Luis Tato

# Contents

Executive summary . . . . .	1
Background . . . . .	2
SFERA set-up . . . . .	3
SFERA resources . . . . .	4
Use of SFERA funds. . . . .	5
Working capital component. . . . .	6
Revolving fund component . . . . .	8
Programme component . . . . .	12
Conclusions . . . . .	20



# Executive summary

- The **Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)** enables the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to take rapid and effective action in response to food and agricultural threats and emergencies.

The Fund has three components:

- a working capital component to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis;
- a revolving fund component to support FAO's involvement in needs assessment and programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency<sup>1</sup> preparedness and response activities; and
- a programme component, which pools resources in support of a programme framework for large-scale emergencies or strategically complements ongoing programmes through the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window, as well as early actions triggered by corporate early warnings.

From its inception in 2004 through 31 December 2019, SFERA received USD 249 million, of which 210.2 million were allocated as follows:

- USD 105.3 were allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. sudden onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, locust outbreaks, fall armyworm and protracted crises);
  - USD 53.5 million were distributed under the AIRC window;
  - USD 28 million were used to reinforce country office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation;
  - USD 13.7 million were distributed to the Level 3 emergencies preparedness and response window; and
  - USD 9.7 million were contributed to the early action window.
- 
- Since SFERA's inception, under its working capital component, USD 412.4 million have been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 21.5 million were advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as at 31 December 2019 amounted to USD 0.3 million. SFERA's cash balance as at 31 December 2019 was USD 38.6 million.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sudden onset, large-scale disasters and crises that require a corporate response.



## Background

During its Hundred and Second Session in May 2003, the Finance Committee supported the creation of the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), with the purpose to “...enable the Organization to rapidly initiate emergency operations by participating in interagency needs assessment and coordination activities, establishing an emergency coordination unit, preparing a programme framework and projects, and providing advance funding for procurement of inputs when a donor’s commitment has been obtained”<sup>2</sup>.

This annual report provides a brief description of the major operations initiated with SFERA funds for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2019. The report contains financial data for this period, as well as for the 16 years since the Fund became operational.

---

<sup>2</sup> FC 102/14.

# SFERA set-up

SFERA has three components:

- **Working capital component:** to advance funds, once a resource partner’s commitment is secured, toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis;
- **Revolving fund component:** to support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ (FAO) involvement in needs assessment, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency<sup>3</sup> preparedness and response activities; and
- **Programme component:** to support work on specific large-scale emergency programmes, or strategically complement ongoing programmes through the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window, as well as early actions triggered by corporate early warnings.

Table 1. SFERA components and windows

Working capital component	Revolving fund component	Programme component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables rapid response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency coordination and response capacity window</li> <li>• Needs assessment and programme development window</li> <li>• Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-scale programme window (e.g. sudden onset disasters, highly pathogenic avian influenza, the Sahel, El Niño and protracted crises)</li> <li>• Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window</li> <li>• Early action window</li> </ul>

The **working capital component** reduces the reaction time to emergencies by enabling FAO to initiate activities and purchase the most critical assets before funding from resource partners is received. By enabling a rapid response, this component helps to mitigate the impact of threats and emergencies and hasten the recovery of those affected.

The **revolving fund component** supports the efforts of FAO’s emergency country teams to identify the most critical needs of affected populations, strengthen response capacity, and develop and coordinate technically sound response programmes. Through the Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window, FAO can prepare for and respond to the extraordinary challenges facing the agriculture sector during a Level 3 emergency.

The **programme component** facilitates faster and more programmatic assistance that can be tailored to evolving needs on the ground. SFERA’s pooled funding approach provides the flexibility to adjust activities and support according to the geographical and thematic areas of greatest need. Likewise, the programme approach enables operations to adapt as the situation changes, streamlining activities to ensure the most appropriate assistance reaches affected populations sooner. The programme component also includes the AIRC window that channels pooled funds towards the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. With the early action window, FAO is enabled to act early once an impending threat has been identified before disaster losses are sustained in the agriculture sector or livelihoods compromised.

<sup>3</sup> Sudden onset, large-scale disasters and crises that require a corporate response.

## SFERA resources

**Receipts** – Since SFERA’s inception in April 2004, the Fund has received a total of USD 249 million. Of this amount, USD 175 million were provided by the member countries listed in Table 2, including USD 8.1 million provided by resource partners that transferred the balances of closed emergency projects to SFERA. During the 12 months that ended on 31 December 2019, deposits to SFERA amounted to USD 18.7 million.

**Table 2. SFERA funding receipts**

<b>Contributors</b>	<b>Since inception (USD)</b>	<b>January–December 2019 (USD)</b>
Australia	107 000	-
Austria	1 131 000	6 000
Belgium	54 961 000	4 704 000
Canada	9 583 000	294 000
Chile	5 000	-
China	500 000	-
Czechia	36 000	-
Finland	3 747 000	2 000
France	8 969 000	98 000
Germany	1 305 000	-
Greece	227 000	-
Holy See	30 000	-
Ireland	6 229 000	2 777 000
Italy	1 490 000	-
Japan	430 000	-
Jordan	60 000	-
Kuwait	50 000	-
Lao People’s Democratic Republic	14 000	-
Luxembourg	8 000	-
Monaco	59 000	-
Netherlands	4 463 000	1 000
New Zealand	13 000	-
Norway	34 472 000	-
Saudi Arabia	1 377 000	-
South Africa	452 000	-
Spain	520 000	-
Sweden	30 581 000	2 306 000
Switzerland	4 939 000	2 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	9 339 000	-
Others (less than 5 000)	37 000	-
<b>Total Members</b>	<b>175 134 000</b>	<b>10 190 000</b>
DOC	73 021 000	8 340 000
Opec fund	481 000	-
Total UN	505 000	200 000
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>249 141 000</b>	<b>18 730 000</b>

As of 31 December 2019 – Source: compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger

\* Accounting reclassifications

## Use of SFERA funds

Under the working capital component, USD 412.4 million was advanced to projects after resource partners' commitment, but before receiving the cash contributions. Of this amount, USD 0.3 million remains outstanding, pending receipt of resource partner funds.

Of the USD 249 million contributed, USD 41.8 million were approved under the revolving fund component (USD 4.8 million during the reporting period). A total of USD 169 million was allocated under the programme component, of which USD 105.3 million was disbursed under the Thematic and Regional window. The use of the funds is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Funding components

	Since inception (USD)	January–December 2019 (USD)
<b>Advances</b>		
<b>Working component</b>		
Total advances made during the period	412 392 000	21 502 000
Refunds on advances paid during the period	412 127 000	28 849 000
<b>Outstanding advances</b>	<b>265 000</b>	
<b>Applications</b>		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	15 357 000	50 000
Needs assessment and programme development missions	12 656 000	200 000
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response	13 747 000	4 500 000
<b>Total revolving component</b>	<b>41 760 000</b>	<b>4 750 000</b>
<b>Programme Component</b>		
<b>Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity</b>	<b>53 487 000</b>	<b>2 320 000</b>
<b>Early action</b>	<b>9 696 000</b>	<b>4 496 000</b>
<b>Thematic and regional window</b>	<b>105 317 000</b>	<b>2 777 000</b>
<i>Horn of Africa (regional programmes)</i>	<i>13 748 000</i>	<i>228 000</i>
<i>The Sahel (regional programmes)</i>	<i>3 552 000</i>	<i>910 000</i>
<i>Avian influenza campaign</i>	<i>45 928 000</i>	
<i>Tsunami campaign</i>	<i>10 002 000</i>	
<i>Initiative on soaring food crisis</i>	<i>1 168 000</i>	
<i>Locust campaign</i>	<i>4 982 000</i>	
<i>Protracted crisis</i>	<i>4 786 000</i>	<i>1 138 000</i>
<i>Typhoon and hurricane</i>	<i>15 598 000</i>	
<i>El Niño</i>	<i>4 552 000</i>	
<i>Fall armyworm</i>	<i>1 001 000</i>	<i>501 000</i>
<b>Subtotal programme component</b>	<b>168 500 000</b>	<b>9 593 000</b>
<b>Grand total applications</b>	<b>210 260 000</b>	<b>14 343 000</b>
<b>SFERA balance</b>	<b>38 615 000</b>	

## Working capital component

**Advances** – During the reporting period, 96 percent of SFERA advances were in support of projects funded from two resource partners, as shown in Table 4. Once a resource partner's commitment is secured, funds are allocated towards the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis.

**Table 4. SFERA advances from resource partners**

Resource partner	Advances (USD)	Refunds (USD)
United States of America	16 102 000	16 102 000
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	4 500 000	6 500 000
Germany	-	2 544 000
Norway	-	2 000 000
Belgium	500 000	500 000
Italy	400 000	400 000
Canada	-	340 000
France	-	200 000
New Zealand	-	135 000
World Food Programme	-	127 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 502 000</b>	<b>28 849 000</b>

Advances mainly supported major programmes in Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan, representing more than 93 percent of all advances between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. SFERA advances for country programmes**

Country	Advances (USD)	Refunds (USD)
South Sudan	8 300 000	8 300 000
Somalia	5 945 000	7 013 000
Afghanistan	4 650 000	4 850 000
Nigeria	1 000 000	4 476 000
Syrian Arab Republic	-	2 000 000
Sudan	340 000	340 000
Madagascar	250 000	250 000
Yemen	250 000	250 000
Zimbabwe	250 000	250 000
Global	337 000	337 000
Subregional West Africa	180 000	180 000
Myanmar	-	340 000
Philippines	-	262 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 502 000</b>	<b>28 849 000</b>

Protracted crisis has continued to drive humanitarian needs in South Sudan, with levels of severe food insecurity reaching alarming levels. SFERA advances enabled FAO to rapidly improve food production by providing livelihood inputs according to seasonality, supporting crop, vegetable and fisheries production in the main season, and vegetable and fisheries production in the lean season. FAO has also increased consumption of nutritious, vitamin-rich vegetables through the provision of market-based nutrition vouchers and the establishment of community gardens. FAO has safeguarded livestock assets through large-scale vaccination and treatment campaigns; procurement of veterinary equipment and laboratory diagnostic test kits; and building the capacity of community-based animal health services. In addition, SFERA supported timely access to food security information to inform decision-making through data collection, monitoring and analysis. SFERA advances have also enabled FAO to increase local preparedness and response capacity and strengthen coping mechanisms and skills in agricultural production.

Recurrent natural disasters, most significantly droughts and floods, undermined Somalia's recent improvements in food security. A total of 4.6 million people in Somalia faced acute food insecurity in December 2018, and it was projected that the number would increase in 2019. SFERA advances enabled FAO to immediately restore livelihoods and improve food security. FAO increased food production through the distribution of agricultural inputs, livestock inputs and fisheries inputs, all combined with cash transfers (Cash+). Furthermore, approximately 14.7 million goats were protected from contagious caprine pleuropneumonia through a large-scale vaccination campaign. FAO also supported the analysis of surface and groundwater as well as soil surveys that will underpin the Government's capacity to manage flood and drought emergencies. FAO assessed the food security and nutrition situation and shared the analysis with a broad range of stakeholders to facilitate effective, evidence-based decision-making. FAO strengthened Government and partners capacity to monitor, assess and analyse food security and built capacity in early warning, early action emergency response.

Drought and conflict are the primary drivers of the immense humanitarian need in Afghanistan. Approximately 54 percent of Afghans live on USD 1 per day and struggle to meet their basic requirements, resulting in chronic malnutrition and severe food insecurity. SFERA funding facilitated FAO's robust response to the emergency in Afghanistan, improving food production, protecting livelihoods and strengthening the humanitarian response. FAO rapidly distributed emergency wheat production kits, containing wheat seed and fertilizer, to vulnerable seed-insecure people, and trained farmers on good wheat cultivation practices to increase their production. FAO strengthened the humanitarian response through analysing needs and gaps, and utilizing the results to design, monitor and coordinate the response. It strengthened the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, maintaining coordination at national and subnational levels, and improving the efficiency of the information management system. FAO built partners' capacity to respond effectively to needs by providing technical food security standards and response guidelines.

Violent conflict in northeast Nigeria has resulted in large-scale displacements, food insecurity and malnutrition. According to the *Cadre Harmonisé* (October 2018), around 2.7 million people would have continued to face high levels of severe food insecurity between June and August 2019 in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. Thanks to SFERA advances, the food security and nutrition of vulnerable people in northeastern Nigeria has been improved. FAO provided fast and vital support to improve the food security and nutrition of vulnerable people in the three Nigerian states. It provided livestock (goats) and animal feed along with trainings on good nutrition to women-headed households through a protection-sensitive approach. These SFERA advances enabled FAO to significantly improve the food production of conflict-affected farmers through the provision of agricultural inputs for both the rainy and dry season, including staple crop and vegetable seed, fertilizers and agricultural hand tools.

## Revolving fund component

The **emergency coordination** window of SFERA's revolving fund component facilitates the rapid deployment of emergency experts, as well as the reinforcement of existing teams to support additional activities or fill short-term funding gaps. Table 6 shows the allocation of resources by country.

**Table 6. Emergency coordination**

Country	Approved allocation (USD)
Afghanistan	66 000
Burkina Faso	35 000
Burundi	40 000
Cameroon	45 000
Central African Republic	23 000
Colombia	4 000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	254 000
Haiti	70 000
Iraq	60 000
Lebanon	53 000
Mozambique	6 000
Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali	10 000
Nigeria	10 000
Somalia and South Sudan	10 000
South Sudan	35 000
Syrian Arab Republic	21 000
Turkey	117 000
Uganda	56 000
Ukraine	30 000
United Republic of Tanzania	33 000
Venezuela	188 000
<b>Total allotment</b>	<b>1 166 000</b>

The **needs assessment and programme development** window of the revolving fund finances needs assessment activities at the onset of a crisis to support FAO and its partners in obtaining the information needed to formulate rapid response programmes as well as longer-term resilience strategies. During the reporting period, needs assessment and programme formulation exercises were implemented in the countries shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Needs assessment mission allocations

Country	Approved allocation (USD)
Afghanistan	4 000
Albania	14 000
Bahamas	45 000
Cameroon	10 000
Central African Republic	35 000
Colombia	65 000
Comoros	29 000
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	65 000
Haiti	6 000
India	30 000
Iran	15 000
Iraq	20 000
Lao People's Democratic Republic	27 000
Madagascar	161 000
Mozambique	6 000
Myanmar	8 000
Nicaragua and Honduras	52 000
Niger	5 000
Philippines	44 000
Sudan	25 000
Timor-Leste	75 000
Uganda	4 000
Venezuela	46 000
Yemen	10 000
Zimbabwe	4 000
<b>Total allotment</b>	<b>805 000</b>

The **Level 3 emergency preparedness and response** window was established under the revolving fund component following the Finance Committee's endorsement at its Hundred and Forty-Seventh Session<sup>4</sup>. This window focuses on the following six areas:

- i. development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures;
- ii. capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness;
- iii. organizational preparedness;
- iv. participation in Level 3 interagency processes;
- v. Level 3 simulations; and
- vi. Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

<sup>4</sup> FC147/8



## Preparedness

Under the “**Development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures**” area, the emergency preparedness status of 150 country offices was analysed based on a self- assessment of emergency response capacity in country as indicated in the corporate FAO country annual reports. A more detailed analysis and preparedness planning was completed for 24 country offices through the application of the FAO Emergency Response Preparedness Plan (FERPP) tool. Based on the analysis of regional and country office emergency response preparedness status, emergency preparedness and response capacity was strengthened through tailored capacity-development activities. The emergency preparedness and response area of the FAO Corporate Handbook was further expanded making available online practical guidance and tools for emergency preparedness and response. Furthermore, the window supported the introduction of adaptive programming guidance in the revised FAO Country Programming Framework guidelines in line with the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

The “**Capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness**” and “**Level 3 Simulations**” area supported the design of four simulation-based trainings covering the core elements of emergency preparedness and response making use of adult interactive learning methodologies. Training events were carried out in Southern Africa (Johannesburg, March 2019), Eastern Africa (Addis Ababa, May 2019), Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, July 2019), and Near East (Cairo, November 2019). The aim of these training events was to ensure that a minimum basic knowledge and capacity for emergency preparedness and response is in place among core national country-level staff and key work groups from the Regional/Subregional Offices. Each of the four training events was structured around context-specific hazards, preparedness and response timelines and FAO structures and chain of command.

Under the “**Organizational preparedness window**” area, the Emergency Response Preparedness Package for Resilience covering (i) Disaster Risk Prioritisation, (ii) FERPP, and (ii) Contingency Planning was refined and an audio video guide was produced to facilitate the use of these tools. Under the Emergency Response Roster workstream, selection procedures were simplified and reflected in the online corporate handbook. Additional candidates were selected and endorsed for key emergency response profiles. In addition, this window supported the development of a strategy to enhance linkages between social protection and early warning and early action, as one of the core components around risk informed and shock responsive social protection. This included, inter alia technical preparatory work for the design of early warning/action pilot interventions in Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

Under the “**Participation in Level 3 interagency processes**” area, funding enabled FAO to participate in all relevant interagency processes related to emergency response preparedness such as the global Food Security Cluster Preparedness and Resilience Working Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Results Group 1 on Operational Response, which includes emergency preparedness, early warning and early actions. This window also supported FAO led assessment work under the Global Preparedness Partnership in Viet Nam to strengthen national preparedness capacity.

## Response

Funds allocated under the “**Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response**” area support FAO’s immediate response actions on a ‘no-regrets’ basis, which is defined as the commitment of resources in the absence of detailed needs assessments and response plans. During the reporting period, resources were approved on a ‘no-regrets’ basis for emergency response activities in Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Mozambique and the Niger.

**Table 8. Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response allotments**

<b>Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response</b>	<b>Allotment (USD)</b>
Mozambique	500 000
Burkina Faso	500 000
Mali	200 000
Niger	200 000
Haiti	200 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 600 000</b>

The SFERA Level 3 funds for Mozambique in response to Tropical Cyclone Idai and Cylone Kenneth in March and April 2019, respectively, enabled FAO to rapidly deploy the required capacity to support the country office during the first phase of response. A surge support team with a mixed skill set of operational, programming and technical capacity was deployed to immediately establish operational hubs in the affected areas. The team contributed to overall multistakeholder planning exercises (Humanitarian Country Team/Humanitarian Response Plans, Government), inter-agency coordination (Food Security Cluster) and multistakeholder assessments (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission). The requisite financial resources were mobilized and partnerships established at field/operational level, as well as with potential donors. Vulnerable families affected by the cyclones have been able to resume production for adequate food security and nutrition.

SFERA Level 3 funds allocated to Burkina Faso have allowed for an immediate reinforcement of the country office capacities to respond to the food security crisis in Burkina Faso caused by insecurity and massive displacement. In the first two weeks of the Scale-up Activation, a mission to support emergency programme development and operations was deployed. In addition, an Emergency Response Manager was recruited and fielded. This enabled

an immediate analysis of the humanitarian needs, a human resources gaps evaluation in view of the Scale-up and promoted engagement with key partners. SFERA funding was instrumental in quickly proceeding with the recruitment of key profiles, such as a national Communication Officer, an international Programming Officer and an international Information Management Officer for the Food Security Sector. This long-term reinforcement was complemented with surge missions on communication for training purposes and support on the elaboration of a communication plan; two missions for the Food Security Cluster to support the activation of cluster country-wise and a cash mission to review ongoing and future cash activities.

Further to the activation of the Scale-up in Mali, SFERA Level 3 funds were instrumental in securing the country office capacity on resilience and emergency response by covering the cost of an Emergency and Resilience Officer. Furthermore, SFERA funding enabled the deployment of a joint surge mission aiming at finalizing a Joint Response Plan with the World Food Programme. This positioned FAO Mali strategically with its partners. The mission also helped identify key human resource gaps and the reinforcement of suboffices in Mopti and Timbuktu.

In Niger, the SFERA Level 3 funds played a key role in supporting the recruitment of an Emergency and Resilience Programme Specialist. It allowed the country office to develop key strategic notes to help with resource mobilization. Furthermore, in anticipation of increased procurement activities, the SFERA supported the secondment of a Procurement Specialist to ensure smooth delivery and timing of activities during the rainy season and the pastoral lean season.

The SFERA Level 3 funds allocated to Haiti in December 2019 will allow a substantial reinforcement of the country office capacities to respond to the current economic and food crisis that is battering the country. Various key additional capacities will be deployed over 2020 such as an international food security and livelihoods expert and an international procurement officer. A number of national positions to strengthen key areas of work will be also co-funded: monitoring and evaluation, security and programme. The SFERA funds will also allow strengthening the country team capacities on cash-based transfer modalities.

## Programme component

Under the SFERA programme component, USD 2.3 million were allocated under the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window, USD 2.0 million under the early action window, USD 0.5 million under the fall armyworm (FAW) programme window, USD 1.1 million under Protracted crisis, USD 0.2 million under Horn of Africa and USD 0.9 million under the Sahel window during the reporting period.

### Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity window

Under the AIRC window, USD 4.4 million were received from Belgium and Sweden. Contributions by these donors through this window have supported FAO's country teams to respond quickly to large-scale crises through the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. The funds were allocated to eight countries in need of emergency agricultural assistance, which is a most critical humanitarian intervention, while developing a more programmatic response to crises.

**Table 9. Funding provided under the AIRC window**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Type of intervention</b>	<b>Amount (USD)</b>
Burkina Faso	Emergency response to the food and nutrition crisis and strengthening the resilience of households affected by insecurity in Burkina Faso	500 000
Cameroon	Emergency response to refugees and displaced people as a result of the Boko Haram crisis in Goura, Logone-et-Chari region	100 000
Chad	Nutrition-sensitive agriculture for families headed by single women with children under five at risk of food insecurity	100 000
Iraq	Support to rural returnees through cash for work to rehabilitate agricultural assets and replace agricultural equipment for the revitalization of agriculture, livelihoods and food production	500 000
Mozambique	Emergency livelihood support to the most vulnerable populations affected by Tropical Cyclone Idai	225 000
Syrian Arab Republic	Protection of livelihoods of returnees and crisis-affected small-scale herders in Deir-ez-Zor governorate of northeast Syrian Arab Republic	500 000
Uganda	Emergency agricultural livelihood support for improved resilience and self-reliance in refugee-hosting districts	294 000
Yemen	Emergency response to desert locust outbreak in Yemen	100 000
<b>Total</b>		<b>2 319 000</b>

In 2019, Burkina Faso faced alarming and unprecedented levels of food insecurity, affecting both host communities and refugees. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO acted swiftly, increasing lean-season production through the distribution of improved cowpea seeds and fertilizers and capacitated beneficiary households on good agricultural practices through trainings. Importantly, FAO aggregated and stored animal feed and veterinary inputs, which could be rapidly distributed in the event of an animal health emergency. This intervention has strengthened emergency preparedness and the resilience of internally displaced people and their host communities.

Violent attacks by Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria displaced thousands of people between January and February 2019. Many households sought refuge in Cameroon, including pastoralists who moved herds of oxen, small ruminants and donkeys. The large influx of animals into Goura, Cameroon exhausted its water resources and pasture. In such poor living conditions, animal diseases spread, negatively impacting livestock productivity and inflaming social tensions between refugees and host communities. Utilizing SFERA AIRC funds, FAO swiftly carried out an animal health campaign, administering vaccinations and distributing supplemental animal feed, which safeguarded livestock production. These funds also enabled FAO to drill boreholes that increased water resources, further improving animal health and productivity.

Chad's Batha Province suffers from extremely high levels of food insecurity, with the rate of global acute malnutrition at nearly 17 percent. SFERA AIRC funds enabled FAO to rapidly improve the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable women-headed households, particularly breastfeeding women. Specifically, FAO catalysed women farm cooperatives, distributing crop and vegetable seed, supplying conditional cash transfers, and providing trainings on nutrition-sensitive agriculture as well as financial management.

The conflict in Iraq left millions displaced and 2.4 million people vulnerable to food insecurity as of February 2019. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO rapidly responded to the crisis. Vulnerable households were supported with income-generating opportunities through a cash-for-work scheme that rehabilitated productive agricultural infrastructure, including greenhouses and storage facilities that were damaged in the conflict. This has improved the livelihoods of Iraq's rural returnee population in Salah Al Din and Nineveh governorates.

Mozambique endured two large-scale tropical storms in 2019, exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Flooding severely damaged crops just prior to the annual harvest, leading to extensive losses in cereal production as well as losses in seeds and other agricultural inputs/assets. SFERA AIRC funding enabled FAO to quickly procure and distribute maize, bean seeds and agricultural hand tools, empowering 17 690 households to restore their livelihoods. These beneficiary households planted 5 040 ha of land on which they produced 2 850 tonnes of maize, covering 85 percent of their household cereal needs. They also produced 120 tonnes of bean, covering their consumption needs for one year as well as providing a surplus that could be sold for income. SFERA AIRC intervention contributed to enhance the food security and nutrition of cyclone-affected populations.

The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has deeply impacted the livestock subsector. Holdings of sheep and goats declined by more than 40 percent since 2011. Recent low precipitation and continuing widespread insecurity have resulted in a lack of pasture and fodder availability as well as grazing lands, further impacting livestock assets. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO restored assets and increased livestock productivity, improving food security and nutrition through providing sheep and feed to vulnerable households in Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa governorates.

The influx of 1.2 million refugees into Uganda in late 2018 strained labour markets and accelerated the rate of deforestation and land degradation. Communities in refugee-hosting districts are some of the poorest in the country and are particularly vulnerable to recurring shocks. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO swiftly responded to the emergency, providing support to refugee and host community households. SFERA funding enabled FAO to distribute vegetable and staple crop seed with short maturation periods, quickly increasing the availability and diversity of nutritious foods. In addition, FAO distributed tree seedlings and provided trainings on agroforestry and tree nursery management that enhanced agroforestry systems and offered income-generating opportunities. Building community garden centres also contributed to natural resource management and slowed the high rate of forest loss.

The conflict in Yemen plunged the country into one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. The appearance of desert locusts in April 2018 shocked the already struggling agriculture sector, severely impacting the livelihoods of many farming households. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO rapidly responded to control the spread of the pest and protected over 13 000 ha of land, safeguarding the agricultural production of nearly 80 000 farmers.



## Early action window

The early action window enables the Organization to work with national governments and civil society to initiate anticipatory early action, specifically for the agriculture-, food- and nutrition-related sectors. The objective is to protect at-risk communities by increasing the resilience of the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, herders, fishers and forest-dependent communities as well as of food systems. The expected outcomes include reduced emergency caseloads and costs of response and averting disaster losses. The early action window anticipates natural disasters, including climatic anomalies (e.g. droughts, floods, and temperature extremes), pest and disease outbreaks (e.g. livestock and crop disease, locusts) and complex emergencies.

The window supports early actions defined as activities taken once an impending threat has been identified, but before disaster losses are sustained in the agriculture sector or livelihoods are compromised. The window finances early actions that (i) prevent an unfolding disaster from happening; (ii) mitigate the impacts of an anticipated event; or (iii) strengthen emergency response capabilities for a specific, imminent threat through targeted preparedness investments.

Support is provided for necessary preparatory activities to enable a rapid response should conditions deteriorate (including setting human resource systems in place, proposal development and liaison with resource partners, developing agreements with suppliers and starting tender processes, strengthening the capacity of local partners, surveillance, assessments and analysis, and coordination support). Funding is provided to initiate appropriate interventions on the basis of forecasts.

**Table 10. Early action window funding**

Country	Allotment (USD)
Central America	400 000
Madagascar	400 000
Malawi	400 000
Philippines	400 000
Zimbabwe	396 000
<b>Total allotment</b>	<b>1 996 000</b>

In November 2018, the development of a weak El Niño began to raise fears in the Philippines about a potential drought. This fear was further exacerbated by the forecasts of little rainfall and high temperatures. This prompted early action planning to mitigate the effects of the dryness on vulnerable rice farmers. Between November 2018 and March 2019, the project assisted 1 500 households in Cotabato and Maguindanao regions of Mindanao province. Activities aimed to protect the livelihood of rice farmers from drought but also encourage livelihood diversification. Actions included the provision of drought-resistant rice seeds, livestock (ducks and goats), vegetable seeds and gardening tools as well as irrigation support and cash for work. The project further provided province-wide advocacy on El Niño and its potential impact on farming systems.

The project generated key lessons learned on how to work in a conflict context to address a climate hazard. Mid-way into the project, fighting broke out and beneficiary families were forced to spend up to a week in nearby makeshift evacuation centres. When FAO designed the intervention, it anticipated that conflict might escalate at any point during the project – ensuring that rice farmers who could not access their fields were part of the cash-for-work scheme, and vegetable gardens and livestock were centered in safe-zones.

The weak El Niño in 2018/19 also threatened vulnerable farmers across Southern Africa. Since the start of the cropping season in October 2018, anomalous dry conditions were developing across parts of the region, which could have reduced cereal production prospects and lowered pasture yields. In light of the El Niño episode and its historically damaging impact on food security and agriculture in the region, FAO decided to take action and intervene early in the year to protect the growing season of crops. Based on hotspot prioritization analysis at regional and country-level, five countries were considered high-risk: Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. FAO started early action projects in all five countries.

Three projects were funded through the SFERA Early Action window in Malawi, Madagascar and Zimbabwe. The goal of the projects was to anticipate and mitigate the impact of El Niño-driven drought on the agricultural livelihoods and assets of the most vulnerable, potentially affected households. Between January and July 2019, FAO targeted 7 575 households in Malawi, 3 000 households in Madagascar and 1 700 households in Zimbabwe. Early actions were carefully tailored to each country context. Activities included the diversification of crop production and distribution of agricultural tools, water conservation and harvesting techniques, poultry distribution (as an alternative livelihood), cash distribution to support the vaccination of livestock and capacity building on climate smart agriculture/post-harvest techniques.

In 2018, farmers in the Dry Corridor of Central America were affected by drought during the Primera season, and floods in the Postrera season. These hazards did not allow subsistence farmers to stock adequate amounts of food. Compounding the situation, at the end of 2018, the majority of models predicted that El Niño would last until the Northern Hemisphere spring in 2019. A reduction in precipitation driven by El Niño would have further affected agricultural production during the 2019 Primera season, especially corn and beans (and to a lesser extent rice), as well as livestock. Such forecasts, coupled with estimates of potential food security impacts, triggered early action in April 2019 ahead of the crop planting period.

Between April and September 2019, the project assisted 1 100 vulnerable farming households in the dry corridor of Nicaragua (departments of Madriz and Nueva Segovia) and Guatemala (department of Jalapa). Activities aimed to mitigate the impact of drought on agricultural production and livestock assets, thus preventing a potential food crisis. Early actions included the installation or rehabilitation of water harvesting structures, the distribution of resistant seeds and agricultural tools, the implementation of animal prophylaxis campaigns, trainings on sustainable water management at times of drought, as well as the distribution of information materials and radio programmes on context-specific early action good practices at farm level.

To demonstrate the case for acting early, FAO invested in generating empirical evidence on the cost-effectiveness of Early Warning Early Action. By the end of 2019, the impact of early actions was analysed across two countries: Colombia - to anticipate a projected increase of migration from Venezuela, and the Philippines – to mitigate the impact of El Niño drought on vulnerable rice farmers. Across these two countries, for every USD 1 FAO invested, households had a return ranging from USD 2.6 (Colombia) to 4.4 (Philippines) in avoided losses and added benefits. These empirical studies further add to the growing body of evidence on the importance of anticipatory action and provide a critical insight into the value for money of acting before an anticipated crisis has become a humanitarian disaster.

## Fall armyworm programme window

Under the FAW programme window, USD 501 000 were received from Ireland.

**Table 11. Funding provided under the FAW programme window**

<b>FAW programme window</b>	<b>Amount (USD)</b>
Eastern Africa	501 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>501 000</b>

The spread of FAW posed a serious threat to agricultural livelihoods and food security in East Africa in 2019. Based on 2018 estimates from 12 African countries, up to 17.7 million tonnes of maize could be lost annually due to FAW in Africa without interventions. SFERA funding enabled FAO to rapidly respond to control the spread of the pest in Ethiopia and Kenya. FAO trained farmers on biological and mechanical controls through farmer field schools, and these farmers then implemented what they learned in their own fields to control the spread of the pest and safeguard their production. The farmer fields schools experimented a variety of management techniques and shared their success.

## Protracted crises window

Under the Protracted crises window USD 1 138 000 were received from Ireland.

**Table 12. Funding provided under the protracted crises window**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Amount (USD)</b>
Cameroon	569 000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	569 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 138 000</b>

The protracted conflict in the Lake Chad Basin has uprooted millions and stoked high levels of hunger and malnutrition. Insecurity has left 2.1 million people in the north of Cameroon in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. Compounding the problem, the water level in Lake Chad has declined dramatically in the past 50 years, imperiling populations that depend on the lake's water and fish. SFERA funds enabled FAO to provide critical income opportunities through cash-for-work that reclaimed land for horticultural production, provided agricultural inputs and tools, and trained farmers on good agricultural practices. Fishing livelihoods were also enhanced through increased access to fishponds and the rehabilitation of productive assets through cash-for-work activities. This SFERA funding significantly improved the livelihoods, food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable conflict-affected households in the Lake Chad Basin.

In the Ituri Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo the situation deteriorated drastically in 2018, with violence between communities, military operations and the outbreak of Ebola hemorrhagic fever. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Framework (October 2017-June 2018), the food security situation was alarming compared to that of June 2017. SFERA funds enabled FAO to rapidly respond, increasing the food production of roughly 4 500 households. FAO utilized SFERA funds to quickly procure and distribute market garden inputs (including vegetable seeds and agricultural tools), crop seeds, fishpond kits, livestock husbandry inputs (including goats and guinea pigs) along with cash transfers. This intervention improved the livelihoods, food security and dietary diversity of internally displaced people, returnees, host families and families with a member infected with Ebola.



## Horn of Africa

Under the Horn of African window USD 228 000 were received from Ireland

**Table 13. Funding provided under the Horn of Africa window**

Country	Amount (USD)
Eastern Africa	228 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>228 000</b>

Livestock production systems are the primary source of livelihoods and nutrition in the Horn of Africa. Outbreaks of animal diseases that endanger livestock health and productivity can have a devastating impact on household income, food security and nutrition. Rift Valley fever (RVF) is a severe zoonotic, viral, vector-borne disease that threatens human health, animal health and livestock production. SFERA funding enabled FAO to provide critical support to Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda to enhance their animal health systems to prevent, detect and respond to RVF emergencies at the regional level. FAO built in-country and regional capacity to prevent and respond to the disease through preparedness plans, workshops and trainings of veterinary staff. FAO also improved RVF early warning systems that use climate data to predict areas at risk of vector amplification. In addition, FAO strengthened RVF early detection capacity by providing inputs to national veterinary laboratories.

## Sahel

Under the Sahel window USD 910 000 were received from Ireland.

**Table 14. Funding provided under the Sahel window**

Country	Amount (USD)
Chad	569 000
West Africa	341 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>910 000</b>

The Kanem region in Chad faces chronic food insecurity and has the highest rate of malnutrition in the country during the lean season, with more than 4 percent of the population in severe acute malnutrition. Moreover, its population is threatened by insecurity due to its proximity to Lake Chad and the crisis caused by Boko Haram. Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods, but yields are low because farmers do not have sustainable access to quality inputs or adequate equipment. Thanks to SFERA funding, FAO quickly intensified and diversified agricultural production through agropastoral field schools, the establishment of date palm nurseries, improved irrigation systems and the provision of agricultural inputs. These interventions boosted productivity, increased food security and improved nutrition.

Pig production is central to the livelihoods and food security of people in West and Central Africa. The pig sector is expanding, but is threatened by devastating diseases, like African swine fever (ASF). SFERA funding enabled FAO to swiftly act to improve surveillance and control of ASF in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, and Guinea Bissau. FAO strengthened the capacity of veterinary services in disease surveillance, laboratory diagnostics and control through a variety of trainings. Awareness on reporting by farmers, traders, butchers and other pig sector stakeholders was raised, which is critical in the surveillance and control of the disease. This intervention reduced the risk of cross-border transmissions of ASF, safeguarding pig production and protecting the livelihoods of pig farmers.



# Conclusions

SFERA provides FAO with a tool for increasing predictability and continuity in its response at country level. Contributing to SFERA renders FAO the means to provide rapid, high-impact emergency assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by disaster. It enables FAO to be quicker and more flexible in its response and puts the Organization in a position to quickly upscale its operational capacities at times when needs increase rapidly and exponentially after a disaster.

SFERA interventions identify and integrate the different needs and strengths of women and men, boys and girls. Under the AIRC window, interventions include supporting women-headed households in emergency response, disseminating technologies and practices that prevent and mitigate disaster impact, while reducing women's work burden, promoting women's access to information and training as well as increasing women's access to productive resources and assets. According to the Gender and Age Marker, all SFERA-AIRC projects recently approved address gender equality at least in some dimensions.

SFERA fosters the benefits of acting early. Empirical evidence demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of Early Actions. Evidence built over the past years show that for every USD 1 FAO invested, households had a return ranging from USD 2.5 to 7.1 in avoided losses and added benefits. These empirical studies provide a critical insight into the value for money of acting before an anticipated crisis has become a humanitarian disaster.





# Saving livelihoods saves lives

## Contact

---

### **Office of Emergencies and Resilience**

Rome, Italy  
OER-Director@fao.org

---

### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

[www.fao.org/emergencies](http://www.fao.org/emergencies)  
[www.fao.org/resilience](http://www.fao.org/resilience)



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence