



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)

Annual report 2023





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## REQUIRED CITATION

FAO. 2024. *Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) – Annual report 2023*. Rome.

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# 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, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 (scale-up) 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, including the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window as well as the Anticipatory Action (AA) window triggered by corporate early warnings.

From its inception in 2004 through 31 December 2023, SFERA has received USD 431.7 million.

Under the programming component:

- USD 155.2 million were allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. sudden-onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, or regional protracted crises);
- USD 118.4 million were disbursed under the AIRC window; and
- USD 36.9 million under the AA window.

Under the revolving fund:

- USD 39.6 million were used to set up or reinforce Country Office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation; and
- USD 28.8 million were allocated to the Level 3 (scale-up) emergency preparedness and response window.

Since SFERA's inception, under its working capital component, USD 607.2 million have been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 25 million were advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as of 31 December 2023 amounted to USD 3 million.

SFERA's cash balance as of 31 December 2023 was USD 49.7 million.

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<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 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 resource partner'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 2023. The report contains financial data for this period, as well as data since the Fund became operational.



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

# SFERA set-up

SFERA 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, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 (scale-up) emergency preparedness and response activities; and
- **a programme component** to support work on specific large-scale emergency programmes, or strategically complement ongoing programmes through the AIRC window, as well as the AA window 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>• Advances to enable 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 (scale-up) emergency preparedness and response window</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-scale programme window (e.g. sudden-onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, or regional protracted crises)</li> <li>• AIRC window</li> <li>• AA window</li> <li>• Centrality of Protection and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) window</li> </ul>

The **working capital component** reduces the reaction time to emergencies by enabling FAO to initiate activities and procure 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 hastens 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 (scale-up) 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 AA 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 431.7 million. Of this amount, USD 311.3 million were provided by the Members listed in **Table 2**, including USD 9.3 million provided by resource partners that transferred the balances of closed emergency projects to SFERA. During the period of January–December 2023, deposits to SFERA amounted to USD 62.3 million.

**Table 2. SFERA funding receipts**

<b>Contributors</b>	<b>Since inception (USD 000)</b>	<b>January–December 2023 (USD 000)</b>
Australia	218	0
Austria	1 131	0
Belgium	79 561	5 476
Canada	13 917	1 688
Chile	5	0
China	500	0
Czechia	36	0
Finland	3 747	0
France	9 634	95
Germany	14 992	7 443
Greece	227	0
Holy See	30	0
Ireland	7 424	0
Italy	1 490	0
Japan	430	0
Jordan	60	0
Kuwait	50	0
Lao People’s Democratic Republic	14	0
Luxembourg	8	0
Malta	43	20
Monaco	59	0
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	9 681	0
New Zealand	13	0
Norway	75 165	30 990
Others (less than 5 000)	44	4
Portugal	150	107
Republic of Korea	76	0
Saudi Arabia	1 377	0
Slovenia	107	54
South Africa	452	0
Spain	520	0
Sweden	47 115	4 360
Switzerland	4 942	0
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	38 105	0
<b>Total from Members</b>	<b>311 323</b>	<b>50 216</b>
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	10 000	0
Direct operating cost recovery	107 948	12 000
Louis Dreyfus Foundation	327	0
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries	481	0
Total United Nations	1 639	80
<b>Total received</b>	<b>431 718</b>	<b>62 296</b>

Note: as of 31 December 2023 – Source: Authors’ own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

In view of the growing number of crises and responses, the resources received in 2023 were critical for the effective functioning of the working capital fund enabling a quick and at scale response, including semi and unearmarked contributions. Additional efforts are required to reach a target balance of USD 100 million, which would ensure a fully flexible and efficient SFERA, providing the tool to cope with three simultaneous large-scale crises.



## Use of SFERA funds

Under the working capital component, USD 607.2 million was advanced to projects after resource partners' commitment, but before receiving the cash contributions. Of this amount, USD 3 million remain outstanding, pending receipt of resource partner funds.

Of the USD 431 million contributed, USD 68.4 million were approved under the revolving fund component. A total of USD 311 million was allocated under the programme component, of which USD 155 million were disbursed under the thematic and regional window. The use of funds is detailed in **Table 3**.

**Table 3. Funding components**

Component	Since inception (USD 000)	January–December 2023 (USD 000)
<b>Advances</b>		
<b>Working capital component</b>		
Total advances made during the period	607 175	24 991
Refunds on advances paid during the period	604 160	59 071
<b>Outstanding advances</b>	<b>3 015</b>	
<b>Applications</b>		
<b>Revolving fund component</b>		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	21 190	1 000
Needs assessment and programme development missions	18 421	1 134
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response	28 847	13 000
<b>Total revolving fund component</b>	<b>68 458</b>	<b>15 134</b>
<b>Programme component</b>		
<b>AIRC window</b>	<b>118 420</b>	<b>40 731</b>
<b>AA window</b>	<b>36 923</b>	<b>15 039</b>
<b>Thematic and regional window</b>		
Desert locust campaign	51 105	0
Avian influenza campaign	45 928	0
Typhoon and hurricane	15 598	0
Horn of Africa (regional programmes)	13 748	0
Tsunami campaign	10 002	0
Protracted crisis	4 786	0
El Niño	4 552	0
The Sahel (regional programmes)	3 552	0
COVID-19	2 934	0
Initiative on soaring food crisis	1 168	0
Fall armyworm	1 001	0
Centrality of Protection and PSEA	800	800
<b>Subtotal thematic and regional window</b>	<b>155 174</b>	<b>800</b>
<b>Total programme component</b>	<b>310 517</b>	<b>56 570</b>
<b>Grand total applications</b>	<b>378 975</b>	<b>71 704</b>
<b>SFERA balance</b>	<b>49 726</b>	

Note: as of 31 December 2023 – Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

## Working capital component

**Advances** – During the reporting period, 93.4 percent of SFERA advances were in support of projects funded by the European Commission, Germany and the United States of America, as shown in **Table 4**.

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

Resource partner	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
Australia	750	0
European Commission	2 660	2 660
Germany	15 731	13 731
Kuwait	0	300
Somalia*	0	330
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	900	1 900
United States of America	4 950	40 150
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 991</b>	<b>59 071</b>

\*Funding from the World Bank

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

Advances mainly supported major programmes in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, representing more than 80.7 percent of all advances between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023, as shown in **Table 5**.

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

Country	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
Afghanistan	0	300
Ethiopia	4 950	4 950
Global	1 000	0
Interregional	12 866	12 866
Malawi	500	0
Mozambique	500	0
Philippines	900	1 900
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	865	865
Somalia	0	35 330
Subregional Office for West Africa	750	0
Timor-Leste	0	200
Ukraine	320	320
Yemen	2 340	2 340
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 991</b>	<b>59 071</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

To contribute to addressing the impacts of instability and recurrent environmental shocks in the Tigray region of **Ethiopia**, FAO's response focused on the distribution of agricultural inputs (fertilizer and seeds), as well as the provision of training on good agricultural practices. In this context, SFERA Advances enabled FAO to promptly procure and distribute time-sensitive inputs before critical seasons, enabling the beneficiary households to protect their livelihoods and food security.

On top of pre-existing vulnerabilities, in 2023, the **Horn of Africa** faced its third severe La Niña-induced drought in a decade. Crop failures, death of livestock and disease outbreaks prompted a regionwide FAO intervention to avert further deterioration. To ensure timely response, SFERA Advances enabled five FAO Country Offices to access funds

to swiftly procure and preposition seeds and tools as well as emergency animal health kits. This ensured that rural households across five affected countries could immediately resume production with the onset of seasonal rains.

As part of FAO's emergency and resilience programme in **Yemen**, the Organization is contributing to the implementation of a multiyear United Nations Joint Programme to support the resilience of agriculture-dependent communities. FAO's component within the Joint Programme focuses on the distribution of agricultural and livestock production inputs along with the facilitation of capacity-building activities on climate-smart agriculture. In 2023, thanks to SFERA Advances, FAO was able to fast-track the procurement of seasonal agricultural production inputs to ensure timely distribution to the beneficiary households.



## Revolving fund component

Under the revolving fund component, the **emergency coordination window** facilitates the rapid deployment of emergency experts, as well as the reinforcement of the existing teams to support additional activities or fill short-term funding gaps while the **needs assessment and programme development window** 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.

An amount of USD 697 341 has been allocated under the revolving component for emergency coordination and needs assessment windows from the contribution received from Norway.

Under the **emergency coordination window**, SFERA-allocated funds had a wide-reaching geographical impact. For instance, SFERA supported the Food Security Clusters through the direct deployment of cluster coordinators and information management officers. SFERA also strengthened Country Office technical and programmatic capacities in areas such as cash and voucher assistance, as well as operational capacities. These experts supported the implementation of FAO's emergency and resilience programme, enhanced the delivery of projects, improved the coordination mechanism at national and subnational levels, supported the coordination of assessments and analyses, and strengthened advocacy efforts. **Table 6** shows the allocation of resources by country.

**Table 6. SFERA emergency coordination**

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Afghanistan	65
Burkina Faso	311
Burundi	100
Cameroon	100
Central African Republic	400
Chad	65
Democratic Republic of the Congo	43
Ethiopia	198
Haiti	78
Kosovo <sup>4</sup>	79
Mali	103
Mozambique	176
Myanmar	100
Niger	32
Nigeria	300
Philippines	49
Regional Africa	34
Regional Europe and Central Asia	80
Senegal	100
South Sudan	200
Subregional Central Africa	65
Subregional Eastern Africa	95
Subregional West Africa	290
Syrian Arab Republic	85
Türkiye	207
West Bank and Gaza Strip	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 537</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

<sup>4</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Under the **needs assessment and programme development window**, SFERA allocations played a critical role in supporting needs assessments related to various FAO emergency and resilience programmes across the globe. For example, SFERA allocations supported rapid context analysis and monitoring in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**; analysis of acute malnutrition in **Nigeria**; desert locust surveillance in the **Sudan**; and needs assessments in the **Syrian Arab Republic** following the earthquake of February 2023, among other needs assessment activities.

SFERA funds were also allocated to conduct Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM) surveys in 13 countries (**Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen**). In these countries, agrifood systems and food security are fragile and were put under additional stress by compounding crises in 2023. DIEM surveys deliver critical information for targeting the most vulnerable areas and population groups, as well as programmatic entry points based on analysed needs. Thanks to SFERA allocations, DIEM is increasingly enabling the Organization to access quality, granular and timely data that can be actioned to design emergency and resilience programming. **Table 7** shows the allocation of resources by country.

**Table 7. Needs assessment and programme development allocations**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Approved allocation (USD 000)</b>
Afghanistan	99
Burkina Faso	87
Burundi	50
Central African Republic	141
Chad	67
Colombia	30
Democratic Republic of the Congo	373
Ethiopia	4
Haiti	89
Honduras	38
Iran	15
Kosovo	57
Libya	65
Madagascar	122
Mali	100
Morocco	100
Mozambique	91
Myanmar	55
Niger	119
Nigeria	287
Pakistan	60
Philippines	10
Regional Latin America	100
Rwanda	100
Somalia	100
South Sudan	133
Sri Lanka	114
Subregional Central Africa	22
Subregional West Africa	100
Sudan	201
Syrian Arab Republic	285

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Türkiye	100
Uganda	5
West Bank and Gaza Strip	120
Yemen	101
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 540</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

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>5</sup> This window focuses on (i) preparedness measures and activities strengthening FAO's capacity to respond to large-scale emergencies and (ii) Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

Under the "**Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency preparedness**" – "Development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures" area, operational peer reviews of 15 Corporate Emergency Activations under DG Bulletin 2022/06 were completed. The findings of the review will underpin the work of the revision of the Bulletin, scheduled in 2024.

The "**Capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness**" and "**Level 3 Simulations**" areas supported a wide range of activities to strengthen country preparedness. For instance, simulation-based trainings covering the core elements of emergency preparedness and response were carried out in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **Southern Africa**. These training events aimed to ensure that a minimum basic knowledge and capacity for emergency preparedness and response was in place among core national country-level staff. Each of the training events was structured around context-specific hazards, preparedness, response timelines, FAO structures and chain of command. Other capacity development activities were developed and implemented to strengthen the effective utilization of FAO systems for formulating and managing FAO emergency and resilience projects at the country level.

Responding to a constantly evolving environment, the SFERA Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency preparedness was strengthened through the setup of a dedicated area on **PSEA**. This will enable Country Offices to strengthen or build capacities on PSEA to effectively prevent, mitigate and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse as part of FAO's emergency preparedness and response efforts. These resources are complementary from the allotment made under the programme component.

Funds allocated under the "**Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response**" 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 the **Central African Republic, Mozambique, the Sudan**, and the earthquake-affected areas in the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Türkiye**.

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

Country	Allotment USD (000)
Central African Republic	300
Mozambique	200
Sudan	750
Syrian Arab Republic – earthquake-affected areas	600
Türkiye	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 150</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

<sup>5</sup> FC 147/8.

In the **Central African Republic**, following the agreement of the Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to activate the IASC System-Wide Emergency Activation Procedures (Scale-Up Protocols), SFERA Level 3 funds enabled the Organization to rapidly mobilize and deploy human and financial resources to support the Corporate Scale-Up, provide administrative and technical support for programme and project formulation, and strengthen existing capacities to complete ongoing projects.

In **Mozambique**, SFERA Level 2 funds supported the scale-up of operational capacity in the north by enabling the extension of the mission of the Emergency and Resilience Coordinator based in Pemba and covering the contracts of key specialists needed for an adequate humanitarian response in the field and improved resource mobilization efforts and reporting.

Within one month of the outbreak of the conflict in the **Sudan**, SFERA Level 3 funds enabled critical missions to Port Sudan, strategically aimed at supporting farmers during the main harvest season. The deployment of experts from both headquarters and the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa was key to the success of the emergency seed distribution campaign that reached over 1 million farmers and contributed to improving food security and production in the country.

Following the earthquakes that struck the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Türkiye** in February 2023, SFERA Level 3 funds enabled the deployment of surge support missions to reinforce emergency operations and response, cluster/sector coordination, programme and resource mobilization, operations, data collection and needs assessments. FAO's focus was to ensure the continuation and recovery of basic food production while supporting local authorities in assessing agricultural damage and needs.



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## Programme component

Under the SFERA programme component, USD 118.4 million were allocated under the AIRC window and USD 36.9 million under the AA window since inception. From 2023, resources are also mobilized under a new **Protection and PSEA window**, which aims at strengthening the Organization’s capacities in terms of Centrality of Protection, accountability to affected people (AAP) and PSEA.

### Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity window

As shown in **Table 9**, USD 40.9 million were allocated under the AIRC window. These contributions supported FAO to respond quickly to large-scale crises through the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs.

**Table 9. Allocations under the AIRC window**

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Allocations from Belgium</b>		
Bangladesh	Emergency support to flash flood-affected households in Chattogram division to restore the livelihoods of smallholder farmers	500
Cameroon	Enhancing food security and nutrition for vulnerable households affected by floods	400
Nepal	Food security and livelihood recovery and enhancement of vulnerable earthquake-affected farmers in Jajarkot and Rukum-West districts	500
Pakistan	Restoration of livelihoods in the flood-affected district of Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Rajanpur in Punjab	150
South Sudan	Emergency livelihood response programme to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related shocks and natural hazards	300
Syrian Arab Republic	Emergency agriculture support for earthquake-affected farmers and livestock keepers in the northwestern part of the Syrian Arab Republic	535
West Bank and Gaza Strip	Emergency distribution of fodder for small ruminants to guarantee livestock survival and reproduction in conflict	850
<b>Total Belgium</b>		<b>3 235</b>

<b>Allocations from Norway</b>		
Afghanistan	Mitigate the impact of Moroccan locust on the most vulnerable rural households in North and Northeast regions	1 885
Burkina Faso	Improving food security and protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable households in the Boucle du Mouhoun region	2 000
Cameroon	Rapid response to cover the immediate basic needs of households in a situation of food insecurity in the Far North and Southwest regions	1 500
Central African Republic	Emergency assistance to vulnerable Central African populations affected by the impact of internal conflicts and external crises	2 000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Improving access to nutritious food and income for vulnerable people in North Kivu and Tanganyika	4 000
Ethiopia	Emergency support to mitigate the effects of drought in Oromia region	3 500
Honduras	Strengthening and rehabilitating livelihoods of the populations affected by the heavy rainy season and tropical storm Julia	500
Kenya	Livelihood support to vulnerable communities affected by drought in Mandera, Wajir, West Pokot, Makueni and Kitui counties	1 500
Malawi	Emergency response to mitigate the negative effects of tropical cyclone Freddy in the Southern Region among smallholder farmers	500
Mali	Rapid response to cover food needs for food-insecure households in emergency areas	3 000

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
Mozambique	Building the resilience of vulnerable communities for food and nutrition security in Cabo Delgado	1 000
Niger	Improving food security and resilience of communities in Tillabéri, Diffa, Tahoua and Agadez	2 000
Somalia	Restoring agricultural productivity of drought-affected rural communities	3 000
Sudan	Protect livestock assets and restore pastoralist livelihoods by providing emergency livestock interventions	2 000
Syrian Arab Republic	Emergency support for the earthquake-affected farmers in Hama	2 500
Türkiye	Safeguarding the livelihoods of rural households in areas affected by the earthquake	500
West Bank and Gaza Strip	Emergency distribution of time-critical agriculture inputs to safeguard livestock and sustain and reactivate agricultural production	2 805
<b>Total Norway</b>		<b>34 190</b>

Allocations from the Republic of Korea		
Ukraine	Support to emergency activities	76

Allocations from Sweden		
Bangladesh	Increasing food security in Rohingya communities in Cox's Bazar	325
Haiti	Strengthening livelihoods of vulnerable populations in food insecurity-affected areas in the South department	500
Myanmar	Lifesaving emergency livelihood support to cyclone-affected vulnerable farmers in Magway and Sagaing regions	647
Nigeria	Emergency agricultural assistance to conflict-affected communities in northeast Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states)	500
Syrian Arab Republic	Emergency support for the earthquake-affected farmers in the Syrian Arab Republic (Aleppo)	500
Syrian Arab Republic	Emergency agriculture support for earthquake-affected farmers and livestock keepers in the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic	500
Türkiye	Safeguarding the livelihoods of rural households in areas of Türkiye affected by the earthquake	500
<b>Total Sweden</b>		<b>3 472</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>40 973</b>
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Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

In 2023, the quick release of SFERA AIRC funds was critical to protect households and enhance their resilience against future shocks. Below is a short description of the main activities implemented through the funding of this SFERA component.

In May 2023, **Afghanistan** faced a Moroccan locust outbreak, threatening food security and rural livelihoods. The release of SFERA AIRC funds enabled FAO to strengthen locust surveillance capacity, enhance preparedness and provide emergency livestock protection packages and cash assistance to the most vulnerable households to protect their productive assets and reduce the threat to their food security.

In May 2023, Cyclone Mocha hit **Bangladesh**, causing damage to the agriculture sector and rural livelihoods, especially in Chittagong Hill Tracts districts and Cox's Bazar. Thanks to SFERA AIRC funds, FAO enabled flood-affected host community households to restore their livelihoods and improve their food security by distributing crop production inputs; and Rohingya refugees to produce a portion of their food requirements through the provision of micro-gardening kits, winter seeds and other context-specific farming inputs.

The Boucle du Mouhoun region of **Burkina Faso** remains one of the most vulnerable areas in the country to weather extremes and fragile security conditions, hindering the ability of rural communities to produce their food. Through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization provided agro/pastoralist households with cash-based assistance and emergency agricultural production packages, and supported income-generating and capacity-building activities, ultimately protecting rural livelihoods and improving food security.

In **Cameroon**, to contribute to mitigating the impacts of the floods on livelihoods and food security, SFERA AIRC funds were allocated to support the most vulnerable rural households with cash+ interventions. Beneficiary households received unconditional cash transfers along with emergency agricultural, pastoral and fish farming kits, and capacity-building trainings. This intervention enabled the targeted households to cover their basic needs and restore their livelihoods.

External crises compounded the vulnerabilities of rural communities in the **Central African Republic** as the country is reliant on imports of critical agrifood inputs. SFERA AIRC funds supported cash-based interventions along with capacity-building activities, enabling the targeted communities to cover their immediate needs and reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms.

As a result of insecurity and socioeconomic instability, rural communities of Ituri, North Kivu and Tanganyika provinces in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** continued to face significant access constraints to critical production inputs. FAO utilized SFERA AIRC funds to distribute agricultural inputs and implement cash-based interventions. FAO assistance packages focused on targeting internally displaced people, returnees and their host communities to enhance their self-reliance and reduce their dependence on food aid.

While drought conditions have persisted since late 2020 in the southern and southeastern regions of **Ethiopia**, the geographic scope and severity have increased over 2022-23. Drought conditions and scarce resources compelled pastoralists to adopt negative coping mechanisms. In response, through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO provided drought-affected households in Oromia with cash+ assistance in the form of supplementary animal feed and one-time cash transfers to protect community livelihoods and reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms.

**Haiti** continued to grapple with political, socioeconomic and security challenges coupled with the impacts of a series of climate-induced disasters and natural hazards during the past decade. Using SFERA AIRC funds, FAO assisted farming and livestock-keeping households in the communes of Port-à-Piment and Côteaux in the South Department with the distribution of small ruminants, poultry and climate-resilient seed varieties of maize and casava cuttings, along with the organization of technical trainings.

Heavy rains induced by La Niña exacerbated the pre-existing vulnerabilities of agriculture-dependent communities across **Honduras**. When climate forecasts indicated a likely transition from La Niña to El Niño, which could further aggravate food security challenges of at-risk communities, FAO used SFERA AIRC funds to provide the most vulnerable rural households with agricultural production inputs as well as livestock, poultry and fish farming production packages. This intervention was complemented by capacity-building activities on good production and nutrition practices.

Last year, **Kenya** continued to face a severe drought, one of the main drivers of a steady decline in agricultural productivity and food security. To contribute to meeting the livelihood and food security needs of affected communities, the Organization used SFERA AIRC to implement cash+ interventions, providing the most affected agro/pastoralist households with unconditional cash transfers along with livestock protection services and agricultural production inputs.

In March 2023, tropical cyclone Freddy made landfall in the southern region of **Malawi**. The climate-induced disaster struck rural communities at a time when they were already grappling with the impacts of tropical cyclones Ana and Gombe. In response, through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO supported national response efforts by providing

technical support for assessing the impacts of the disaster along with the provision of agricultural production inputs to the most vulnerable households in the affected areas.

In 2023, rural communities in **Mali** continued to face insecurity and socioeconomic instability along with climate-induced challenges. Through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO implemented cash+ interventions, targeting livestock-keeping and farming households in the most food-insecure areas of the country. In particular, the Organization provided unconditional cash transfers to livestock-keeping households to cover their food needs and the needs of their livestock. Farming households received agricultural production inputs along with unconditional cash transfers.

FAO continued to work with key food security and humanitarian partners to support rural communities who were affected by hostilities in northern **Mozambique's** Cabo Delgado province. Through SFERA AIRC funds, the Organization supported displaced and host communities along with returnees through the distribution of time-critical crop production inputs, stimulating existing capacities of local seed producers as well as fishing assets to small-scale fishers.

In **Myanmar**, Cyclone Mocha impacted the food security of millions of people. Thanks to SFERA AIRC funds, FAO was able to support cyclone and conflict-affected households through cash+ interventions, thereby protecting and improving community agricultural livelihoods and strengthening their resilience.

In November 2023, a high-magnitude earthquake struck **Nepal**, resulting in extensive damage to the productive assets of agriculture-dependent communities. To support the affected communities, FAO, through SFERA AIRC funds, distributed agricultural inputs and contributed to the rehabilitation of damaged canals. This intervention enabled the affected households to restore their livelihoods and enhance their resilience against future shocks.



In 2023, climatic shocks, persisting insecurity and economic challenges continued to threaten the livelihoods and food security of rural communities across the **Niger**. To support the resilience of the most vulnerable households in areas with the highest rates of food insecurity, through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO implemented cash+ interventions with the disbursement of unconditional cash transfers along with the distribution of agricultural and livestock production inputs. Moreover, FAO engaged all targeted households in thematic technical trainings and capacity-building activities.

Insecurity and adverse climatic hazards in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states of **Nigeria** continued to disrupt agrifood supply chains and compound the vulnerabilities of agriculture-dependent communities. SFERA AIRC funds were used to provide affected farming households with time-critical agricultural inputs along with the provision of essential extension services. The intervention enabled the targeted households to resume their production during the 2023 rainy season and contributed to increasing the availability of food in local markets.

To support the quick recovery of rural communities in **Pakistan** following the 2022 floods, SFERA AIRC funds were released to provide livestock vaccination against several diseases; deworming; compound livestock feed; fodder seed and fertilizer; and to repair/construct animal shelters. This support enabled flood-affected households to restore and sustain their livelihoods.

In response to successive droughts in **Somalia**, FAO, through SFERA AIRC funds, distributed drought-sensitive and climate-smart agricultural input packages, enabling beneficiary households to take advantage of the seasonal rainfall. Through this intervention, FAO contributed to restoring the agricultural productivity of beneficiary households and improving their access to food.

The fragile food security situation in **South Sudan** was further compounded by the spillover effects of the conflict in the Sudan. To contribute to mitigating the impacts of the conflict, FAO, through SFERA AIRC funds, provided returnees and host community members with agricultural inputs coupled with capacity-building and extension activities, and emergency treatment for livestock.

The ongoing conflict in the **Sudan**, combined with pre-existing factors, has led to an increased shortage of essential food items across the country. In response, the rapid release of SFERA funds enabled FAO to provide vulnerable agro/pastoralist households with agricultural inputs and technical assistance before the summer season.

Following the February 2023 earthquakes that hit the **Syrian Arab Republic**, FAO, through SFERA AIRC funds, was able to quickly assist affected rural communities. The interventions included the disbursement of cash transfers as well as the distribution of agricultural and livestock production inputs. In addition, FAO contributed to the rehabilitation of critical irrigation systems.

In February 2023, powerful earthquakes struck southeastern **Türkiye**, a major agricultural region for the country. The release of SFERA AIRC funds enabled FAO to distribute cash transfers and agricultural inputs to earthquake-affected households, helping them cover their immediate needs while restoring agricultural livelihoods.

As the war in **Ukraine** continued in 2023, the production capacities of rural households and smallholder farmers continued to deteriorate. In support of the overall emergency and resilience response of FAO in Ukraine, limited SFERA AIRC funds were released to fill in programme gaps, with a focus on the procurement of inputs.

Agricultural and agrifood activities in the **Gaza Strip** have largely collapsed since the onset of the ongoing hostilities. Livestock assets, such as small ruminants, are among the few remaining sources of sustenance. Nevertheless, the lack of critical inputs, notably animal fodder, has forced livestock-keeping households to adopt adverse coping mechanisms, including the premature slaughter of livestock. In response, through SFERA AIRC funds, FAO has procured and prepositioned animal fodder to assist livestock-keeping households once access allows.



## Anticipatory Action window

The SFERA AA window plays an instrumental role in supporting FAO's global efforts in scaling up AA approaches to prevent food crises. FAO's AA aims to protect agricultural assets and livelihoods from the impact of hazards in order to prevent the adoption of negative coping mechanisms which lead to hunger and destitution. The SFERA AA window enables Country Offices to access pre-allocated financing necessary for the timely implementation of AA interventions. It releases funds upon accurate early warning signals of an impending disaster, also called triggers. The trigger mechanisms are adapted to the context and priority hazards. They are based on quantitative thresholds and corroborated with qualitative information and expert judgement.

As shown in **Table 10**, USD 15.3 million were allocated under the AA window. Flexible SFERA resources proved critical to allow timely action in the context of multiple concurrent weather extremes induced by El Niño phenomenon, as planned in FAO's AA and Response Plan for El Niño. FAO was able to act swiftly because of enhanced readiness, operational preparedness and capacities for risk monitoring and AA programming.

**Table 10. Allocations under the AA window**

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Allocations from Belgium</b>		
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Anticipatory actions to mitigate the impacts of agricultural drought in the Bolivian Altiplano region	344
Madagascar	Anticipatory actions in Betroka (Anosy), Ambovombe and Bekily (Androy) districts to cope with El Niño-induced drought	1 000
Mongolia	Protecting vulnerable livestock owners from anticipated winter hazard ( <i>dzud</i> ) impacts	223
Uganda	Strengthening flood early warning, preparedness and anticipatory action in hotspot areas	1 000
<b>Total Belgium</b>		<b>2 567</b>
<b>Allocations from Canada</b>		
El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua	Anticipating the impacts of agricultural drought on the dry corridor in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua	1 000
Somalia	Community-led flood anticipatory action to safeguard lives and livelihoods	1 222
<b>Total Canada</b>		<b>2 222</b>
<b>Allocations from Germany</b>		
Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria	Anticipatory action for flood risk in the Sahel	3 000
Colombia	Anticipatory actions to protect agricultural livelihoods exposed to the impact of the El Niño phenomenon	1 000
Ecuador	Anticipatory actions to protect agricultural livelihoods against the impact of El Niño phenomenon	542
Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste	Addressing El Niño-induced climate risks in the Indo-Pacific region with anticipatory action	865
Kenya	Supporting vulnerable communities to anticipate and mitigate the impact of potential El Niño-induced floods	1 000
Malawi	Anticipatory Action interventions to mitigate the negative effects of dry spells in the Southern Region during the planting season 2023/24	500
Mozambique	Anticipating Impacts of El Niño-induced drought to protect smallholder farmers' livelihoods	500
Uganda	Anticipatory actions to limit the potential spread of livestock disease in Karamoja subregion	500
Zimbabwe	Anticipating the impacts of El Niño-induced drought to protect smallholder farmers' livelihoods	500
<b>Total Germany</b>		<b>8 407</b>
<b>Allocations from Norway</b>		
Ethiopia	Mitigating the negative effects of El Niño on agricultural livelihoods through anticipatory action in southern and southeastern regions	1 000
<b>Allocations from Sweden</b>		
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Anticipating the impacts of agricultural drought in Guajira	888
Zimbabwe	Anticipatory actions to protect food security and agricultural livelihoods	244
<b>Total Sweden</b>		<b>1 132</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>15 328</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

In the second half of 2023, El Niño phenomenon coupled with forecasts of below-normal precipitation in the **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, especially in the Altiplano, prompted FAO to implement AA interventions aimed at mitigating the impacts of drought on agricultural livelihoods and food security. Through SFERA AA funds, FAO, in close coordination with national partners, supported vulnerable farming households in Altiplano, by providing water harvesting storage and supply systems, animal feed and animal health interventions, as well as the distribution of drought-tolerant seeds and other agricultural inputs.

In **Colombia**, El Niño was expected to threaten the availability of water for irrigation and livestock production especially in several departments in the northern region. Thanks to SFERA AA funds, FAO implemented interventions to support vulnerable households in high-risk communities. Priority actions included the rehabilitation of community water systems as well as the distribution of livestock and agricultural production inputs. The interventions also served as a practical demonstration of the potential impact of AA interventions.

In November 2023, SFERA AA triggers were activated in response to potential El Niño-induced rainfalls in **Ecuador's** coastal areas. FAO, utilizing SFERA AA funds, implemented interventions to protect the livelihoods and food security of at-risk communities from potential floods. The interventions included the distribution of household and collective silos, crop seeds, seedlings, and post-harvest storage equipment. FAO also provided veterinary supplies and supported the implementation of comprehensive assessment, communication, monitoring and evaluation strategies, emphasizing the role of intersectoral coordination and early warning systems.

In July 2023, climate models indicated the presence of El Niño conditions in **Ethiopia**, and seasonal forecasts pointed to above-average rains in the south and southeast during the October to December rainy season. Ahead of potential floods, with SFERA AA funds, FAO targeted at-risk communities in the Somali region with interventions including the dissemination of early warning messages, disbursement of unconditional cash, provision of animal health support, and initiation of cash-for-work activities to rehabilitate infrastructure.

Triggered by El Niño and above-average rainfall forecasts in July 2023, FAO utilized SFERA AA funds to proactively mitigate the impacts of potential flooding in **Kenya**. FAO's interventions included raising public awareness through media campaigns, directly supporting rural households in flood-prone areas, and implementing protective measures around homesteads, vulnerable river sections, and existing water storage facilities. Additionally, FAO provided grain storage solutions to safeguard post-harvest yields.



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In response to the forecasted El Niño event in 2023, potentially affecting **Madagascar**, FAO allocated SFERA AA funds to protect at-risk communities. The interventions focused on providing comprehensive assistance packages to the most vulnerable households, including unconditional cash as well as agricultural, livestock and fishing inputs. FAO also trained national extension service personnel and beneficiaries on climate-smart and good agricultural practices to enhance resilience to future shocks.

In October 2023, the AA protocol for dry spells was activated in **Malawi** in line with the expected effects of El Niño phenomenon. Thanks to SFERA AA funds, FAO promptly provided unconditional cash transfers to at-risk communities. The cash assistance enabled the beneficiary households to secure inputs for immediate replanting as soon as normal total rainfall amounts resumed, thereby contributing to mitigating potential impacts on their productivity and food security.

In the summer of 2022, livestock-keeping households in **Mongolia** faced adverse conditions due to drought and overgrazing, leading to limited access to pasture and fodder. Forecasted harsh winter conditions threatened to cause significant livestock losses. FAO, with SFERA AA funds, complemented national AA efforts by providing livestock health packages and multipurpose cash assistance to the most vulnerable households in at-risk communities. Moreover, FAO supported the facilitation of onsite training in collaboration with national authorities.

In September 2023, seasonal forecasts pointed to El Niño-induced drought in **Mozambique** that could potentially impact agricultural livelihoods. Through SFERA AA funds, FAO disseminated early warning messages, facilitated capacity-building activities on water-efficient practices, and distributed livestock inputs and e-vouchers for drought-tolerant seeds and tools, among other interventions. This intervention contributed to safeguarding agricultural production and reducing negative coping strategies during dry spells.

In July 2023, forecasts of above-average rains in **Somalia** during the *Deyr* season were in line with the expected effects of El Niño and pointed to a heightened risk of losses in agricultural assets and livelihoods. Thanks to SFERA AA funds, FAO targeted at-risk communities with AA interventions to safeguard their livelihoods from the expected effects of potential El Niño-induced floodings. FAO provided flood-prone farming households with quality seeds, grain storage materials and unconditional cash transfers. The beneficiaries also received training on post-harvest storage, crop protection and irrigation practices to enhance their preparedness.

In October 2022, early warning information in **Uganda's** Karamoja subregion reported a suspected foot-and-mouth disease outbreak. With SFERA AA funds, FAO proactively launched a vaccination and prophylactic treatment campaign targeting at-risk pastoral communities in Karamoja to safeguard their livestock assets. Moreover, El Niño forecasts indicated a high likelihood of floods in late 2023 in the country, threatening the livelihoods and food security of at-risk communities. Thanks to SFERA AA funds, FAO proactively disseminated early warning messages, maintained critical infrastructure, and provided post-harvest assistance.

In mid-2023, an anticipated El Niño event in the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** was expected to lead to an extensive rainfall deficit, risking crop production and livestock health. Utilizing SFERA AA funds, FAO implemented targeted interventions, including support for the establishment of interinstitutional coordination mechanisms, dissemination of early warning information, repairing of wells and water reservoirs as well as the distribution of agricultural, livestock and fishing inputs.

In 2022, forecasts indicated above-average rainfall for the 2022/23 agricultural season in Southern Africa, with La Niña conditions expected until the end of 2023, indicating heavy rainfall in parts of **Zimbabwe**. Using SFERA AA funds, FAO launched an AA intervention to protect agricultural livelihoods ahead of projected shocks, targeting rural households along flash flood-prone river basins. The intervention provided timely agricultural advisory messages during harvest, enabling proper storage of cereals and livestock feed, and mitigating potential crop losses caused by breached dams and above-average seasonal rainfall. Moreover, in response to July 2023 forecasts predicting El Niño-induced drought, FAO disseminated early warning messages and distributed drought-tolerant seeds, fertilizers, tools and livestock feed along with the organization of capacity-building activities.



Ahead of El Niño-induced hazards in the Indo-Pacific region, FAO leveraged SFERA funds to proactively target rural households in **Fiji, Papua New Guinea** and **Timor-Leste**. In Fiji, FAO prepositioned fishing supplies for timely distribution ahead of potential cyclones. In Papua New Guinea, water tanks, seeds and cash were provided to mitigate the impacts of a potential drought. In Timor-Leste, FAO supported the dissemination of early warning information and provided support for drought preparedness, including water system repairs and the disbursement of cash assistance.

In June 2023, global weather models indicated that El Niño conditions were present and expected to gradually strengthen across Central America's Dry Corridor with below-average rainfall potentially impacting the *postrera* season. FAO, utilizing SFERA AA funds, initiated timely interventions in **El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras** and **Nicaragua**. The Organization facilitated trainings, distributed agricultural tools, and established water management systems to enhance crop production and safeguard vulnerable households' livelihoods. The support resulted in protecting agricultural production, particularly for short-cycle vegetables, ensuring food consumption levels and dietary diversity despite rainfall deficits.

Anticipating 2023 flood risks in West Africa, FAO used SFERA AA funds to mitigate the impact of potential flooding on the food security and livelihoods of at-risk rural populations in **Chad, Mali, the Niger** and **Nigeria**. Interventions focused on strengthening early warning systems, raising awareness, and offering direct support. Examples include provision of tools and seeds in Chad; canal maintenance and cooperative equipment provision in Mali; cash-for-work riverbank rehabilitation in the Niger; and community-led rehabilitation works and agricultural input distribution in Nigeria.





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### Protection and PSEA window

As shown in **Table 11**, resources were received from Norway to strengthen FAO’s Country Office capacities in terms of Protection and PSEA.

A key exercise in this process was the assessment of FAO’s protection capacity with an objective to identify the challenges and gaps in organizational policy, programmatic frameworks, guidance, tools and protection capacities. This exercise served to create awareness and sensitize staff to FAO’s role in Protection and the IASC Protection Policy and determine where the Organization needs to invest at the Country Office level.

The contributions also helped in identifying good practices that can be scaled up across the breadth of humanitarian settings. Such examples include targeted efforts to reduce conflict over access to natural resources in **Yemen** and the **Sudan**. They also include advocacy initiatives that FAO has contributed to by producing, analysing and disseminating information on the food security situation in the **Gaza Strip**. At the country level, a Protection and AAP expert is being deployed to **Somalia** to strengthen the capacities of Country Office staff. Further deployments are planned to other crisis contexts as well as a series of regional capacity-building workshops.

**Table 11. Allocation under the Protection and PSEA window**

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Allocation from Norway</b>		
Global	Operationalization of Centrality of Protection: country-level capacity support	800
<b>Total</b>		<b>800</b>

Source: Authors’ own elaboration, compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

# Conclusions

Over the past year, the number and size of humanitarian crises have been increasing sharply, with affected community needs shifting very rapidly and available resources increasingly insufficient to cover all demands. Delays in responding to crises means protracted human suffering, and funding through fully earmarked contributions does not allow agile and fast adaptation to evolving needs, reducing the cost-effectiveness and efficiency in responding to humanitarian crises. The impact of delays in agriculture is long-lasting for affected populations and costly for the humanitarian community.

SFERA provides FAO with a tool to improve timeliness, increase predictability and continue its response at the country level, enhancing support to Members as a result. Contributing to SFERA, including through semi- and unearmarked allocations, renders FAO the means to provide rapid, high-impact emergency assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by various shock categories, including protracted crises, natural disasters and food chain crises.

SFERA puts the Organization in a position to swiftly upscale its operational capacity at times when needs increase rapidly after a disaster. SFERA enables FAO to quickly implement at-scale emergency programmes, contributing to the strengthening of local and national capacities to protect community households, ultimately protecting millions of rural and pastoral households from livelihood loss and distress. SFERA is critical in operationalizing cost-effective AA interventions. Evidence built over the past years shows that for every USD 1 FAO invested in AA, 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.

SFERA interventions identify and integrate the different needs and strengths of women, men, boys and girls. Specific attention is given to ensure that SFERA interventions include supporting female-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.



# Saving livelihoods saves lives

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