



Irish Aid

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External Review of the Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS)

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Table of Contents

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Page</i>
Acknowledgements	II
Table of Contents	III
List of Acronyms	IV
Executive Summary	V
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Overview of ERFS	1
1.2 Objectives of the ERFS Review	2
1.3 Methodology and Limitations of the ERFS Review	2
1.4 Overview of the NGO Partners in Receipt of ERFS Allocations	2
2 Findings	4
2.1 Comparative Analysis with Other Rapid Response Funding Mechanisms	4
2.2 Evidence that ERFS has Enabled Timely and Effective Humanitarian Responses	9
2.3 Benefits and Merits of the ERFS	11
2.4 Compliance with ERFS Guidelines by NGO Partners	13
2.5 Possible Opportunities to Further Improve ERFS	17
2.6 Synergies with Other Irish Aid Funding Mechanisms	19
3 Analysis	20
3.1 Assessment of ERFS Against DAC Criteria	20
3.2 Assessment of ERFS Against Grant Management Best Practice Criteria	21
4 Conclusions and Recommendations	22
<i>Report Appendices</i>	
Annex 1) Terms of Reference (ToR)	25
Annex 2) Summary of ERFS Allocations to NGO Partners, 2015-2018	28
Annex 3) Summary Analysis of Twelve NGO Partner ERFS Applications	31
Annex 4) Schedule of meetings/interviews conducted	33
Annex 5) Detailed Methodology	35
Annex 6) List of Reports and References Used	38

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAR	Central African Republic
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CISU	Civil Society in Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Disaster Assistance Committee
DERF	Danish Emergency Relief Fund
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	Department for International Development
DMFA	Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DRA	Dutch Relief Alliance
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ERFS	Emergency Response Funding Scheme
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HAWG	Humanitarian Aid Working Group
HPA	Humanitarian Partnership Agreement
HPP	Humanitarian Programme Plan
HQAI	Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NCE	No Cost Extension
NFI	Non-food Items
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development'
PGII	Programme Grant II
RAM	Resource Allocation Model
RF	Results Framework
RRC	Rapid Response Corps
RRI	Rapid Response Initiative
RRF	Rapid Response Facility
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SEK	Swedish Krona
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

In 2007, Irish Aid established the Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) to enable NGO Partners to respond quickly and appropriately to humanitarian crises. The scheme is particularly geared towards the initial weeks after the onset of a sudden emergency or spike in an existing protracted crisis when the bulk of the expenses for the immediate response phase for the agency are incurred. The scheme pre-positions a defined amount of funds with participating NGOs at the beginning of the year. This enables the NGO Partner to drawdown on these funds over the course of that year on the basis of identified needs and taking into account the previous year's expenditure.

The specific objective of the ERFS is to *'promote early action and response to time-crucial requirements based on demonstrable needs in sudden onset humanitarian crises or spikes in an existing protracted crisis'*. The ERFS has been operational for over a decade, has been activated more than 200 times for responses in over 40 disaster-affected countries and provided humanitarian funding exceeding €24million to Irish Aid's NGO Partners. The instrument has played a vital role in Ireland's humanitarian response through a productive partnership between Irish Aid and its NGO Partners, which allowed them to respond immediately to most, if not all, major humanitarian crises since it was launched.

This Review has 7 specific objectives which an overall aim of determining the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme as well as informing future amendments, management and resource allocation of the fund. To achieve this, the Review included an examination of all ERFS Guidance documents plus supporting information. An examination was undertaken with 5 other rapid response funding mechanisms and a comparative analysis was conducted. A sample of 2 ERFS projects for each of the 6 current Irish-based NGO Partners was systematically selected and critiqued. Face-to-face meetings were held with all current NGO partners in receipt of ERFS allocations. A number of meetings were held with key informants from relevant Irish Aid departments plus representatives from Irish Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The ERFS Review involved a comparative analysis with five other rapid response funding mechanisms, each of which offers useful insights into how they are designed, activated and managed. This Review acknowledges the comparative advantages and merits of each of these funds however concludes that the ERFS is as good, if not better than them. Following this comparative analysis, suggested improvements are provided for future iterations of the ERFS Guidelines.

An examination was conducted of 12 ERFS project files, 2 for each of the 6 current Irish-based NGO Partners. The conclusion is that there is compelling evidence that ERFS has enabled timely and effective humanitarian responses to sudden onset disasters or spikes in existing protracted crises. This is also evident from the timely and efficient actions taken by the Humanitarian Unit, in response to ERFS applications submitted by NGO Partners wishing to draw down on their prepositioned funding. For the most part, NGO Partners are adhering to the ERFS Guidelines systematically. Where this is not the case, the evidence is provided along with suggested recommendations.

This Review also examined both the appraisal and approval procedures followed by Irish Aid in response to ERFS Application submissions. Given the level of detail required, the number of people involved and the level of compliance entailed with grant management compliance, this whole process is managed effectively and with speed by the Humanitarian Unit in Irish Aid. The Review also examined the appraisal and feedback process of NGO Partner's final ERFS Reports which although thorough, is less efficient and timely. Synergies between the ERFS and other Irish Aid funding mechanisms were reviewed and opportunities for future improvements are presented.

The ERFS is without question one of the most effective and flexible rapid response funding mechanisms available to Irish Aid's NGO Partners who respond to humanitarian disasters. Notwithstanding this, a number

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

of recommendations have been put forward as a result of this Review for consideration and possible action by Irish Aid.

Main recommendations following this Review include:

1. ERFS being Added to Multi-donor Pooled Funded Responses

Consideration should be given to dissuading, or restricting, NGO Partners from adding their ERFS allocation to multi-donor pooled responses where it is evident they have limited or no control over how these funds are used. This is especially true when the humanitarian programme is designed around several large grants, some of which are not confirmed when the decision to include ERFS is made. This can lead to the delayed implementation of the ERFS component of the programme and situation where the country-based team priorities larger grants at the expense of smaller ones. This is not what the ERFS is designed for nor where it can offer much added value.

2. Resource Allocation

Given the albeit isolated incidents where ERFS Guidelines are substantially deviated from, consideration should be given to the introduction of a performance scoring mechanism, similar to the Resource Allocation Model applied under Irish Aid's Humanitarian Programme Plan. This need not be a complex system – a scoring model for each ERFS Grant can be devised and at the end of the year, this can be reviewed to determine how the ERFS allocation should be divided among the participating agencies. As noted by the Director of the Humanitarian Unit, and echoed by most of the NGO Partners, poor performers create a risk for the whole fund which needs to be addressed.

3. Learning and Review Procedures

Holding 360-style learning and review consultations following significant responses which involve three or more NGO Partners (who accessed their ERFS allocation as part of the response) should be considered. These should be held at least annually and would be a valuable learning opportunity for both Irish Aid and its NGO Partners on the management and use of ERFS.

4. Increasing the Size and Scope of the ERFS

The Dóchas HAWG submission (October 2017) to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence recommended the following: *'The speed of approval is key to the value of ERFS and the timeliness of the approval process should be evaluated. Given the usefulness of this funding instrument, access to the fund should be made available to a larger number of NGOs, and the amount of funding allocated to ERFS should be doubled'*. This sentiment was echoed during all face-to-face meetings with the NGO Partners who supported a significant increase in the size of the ERFS fund. Similarly, the new Irish official development policy *A Better World* commits to *'increase our funding and build our capacity for rapid response to sudden onset crises'*. Based on the considerable impact ERFS has had to date and given Ireland's commitment to increasing the aid budget and accelerating its 0.7% target of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030, this would represent a comparatively small investment for a significant return.

5. Broadening ERFS to Encompass Preparedness and or Early Response Actions

Consideration should be given to enable NGO Partners to use their ERFS allocation to carry out advanced preparedness and or early response actions, similar to the Start Fund's Anticipation Window. This would enable NGO Partners to begin responding before a crisis turns into a disaster.

6. Amendment to Ineligible Expenditure for ERFS Applications

Ineligibility criteria should be reviewed by the Humanitarian Unit and consider allowing reasonable and justifiable international travel for inclusion to ERFS Applications. This should also be applied consistently to all NGO Partners. Clarity should be provided on some of the ineligible expenditures from the Guidelines, i.e. visibility costs when branding is of benefit to Irish Aid or insurance costs.

7. Staff Retention

There is a disconnect between the volume of work required by the Humanitarian Unit and the number of staff employed to execute it. The high staff turnover in the Unit, plus the increasing demands for accountability on the small team of 20, necessitate an increase in staff numbers plus a review of retention across the Department.

8. Documenting Internal Procedures

The Standard Operating Procedures for the management and oversight of ERFS should be further developed to fully capture all internal procedures and decision-making processes. This should also include how the Humanitarian Unit engages with the Missions/Embassies in seeking their support with ERFS Applications. There is clear evidence of collaboration and good working practices between the Humanitarian and Civil Society and Development Education Units in Irish Aid. Whilst welcomed, procedures on how these Units engage should be documented, perhaps by the current Directors and Deputy Directors who currently manage it effectively.

9. Communications and Feedback on ERFS Reports

For the most part, communications between the Humanitarian Unit and the NGO Partners is constructive and effective. Most NGO Partners noted that they feel their respective Desk Officer in Irish Aid is approachable however expressed concerns about the impact on their relationship with Irish Aid when their Desk Officer is replaced. This Review also highlights the swift response to ERFS Applications by the Humanitarian Unit culminating in a quick approval decision for the NGO Partner. Communications are at times less than satisfactory when dealing with ERFS reports and providing feedback. Developing procedures resulting in the more timely and efficient appraisal of ERFS Reports for NGO Partners is recommended.

10. Monitoring and Evaluating of ERFS Applications

Unless exceptional circumstances, monitoring or evaluating an ERFS Grant in-country by the Humanitarian Unit is unlikely to make economic or practical sense. However, when selecting countries to be included as part of the joint PG/HPP monitoring visits, consideration should be given to those country programmes that have also had ERFS Grants. It is acknowledged that this will not always be feasible, however it should be added as a component of the selection criteria when choosing an NGO Partner's programme country for assessment. Consideration should also be given to periodically assessing Partner's capacity to effectively implement sudden onset disaster programmes which are relevant to ERFS Grants. This could be done as part of the PG/HPP Application Process or added to the Terms of Reference for Partner monitoring visits.

1.1 Introduction and Overview of ERFs

In 2007, Irish Aid launched a pilot programme known as the Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS), whereby an emergency fund of €500,000 was provided, in advance of need, to each of the three pre-approved NGO partners – Concern, Trócaire and GOAL. Although now more streamlined and structured, with additional partners and a larger budget, the original premise for the scheme and terms of the ERFS agreement was that funds would be prepositioned with preapproved and trusted NGO partners who could draw down on their allocation in response to sudden onset emergencies on a ‘spend now, report later’ basis. The funds would be replenished annually by Irish Aid on submission of satisfactory project reports by the NGO Partners.

Since its inception, Irish Aid has conducted a number of reviews of the fund and updated the ERFS Guidelines plus supporting documents, the approval processes and decision-making procedures. Despite the various iterations to the scheme over the past decade plus the birth of similar rapid response funding mechanisms by other leading institutional donors, it still remains one of the most innovative and flexible funding mechanisms on offer to Irish Aid’s humanitarian NGO Partners.

The instrument has played a vital role in Ireland’s humanitarian response through a productive partnership between Irish Aid and its NGO Partners, which allowed them to respond immediately to most, if not all, major humanitarian crises since it was launched. For example, Irish Aid’s NGO Partners drew down on their ERFS funding in response to the earthquake and floods in Haiti and Pakistan in 2010 respectively; the Horn of Africa in 2011; Sudan and Mali in 2012; and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. In 2014 with support from ERFS, NGO Partners responded to the South Sudan refugee crisis and the initial response to the Ebola crisis; plus the earthquake in Nepal and the European refugee crisis in 2015. In 2016 and again through support from ERFS, NGO Partners responded to the food insecurity and cholera outbreak in Somalia; displacement caused by conflict in South Sudan in 2017; and likewise in DRC in 2018.

Following a positive external review of ERFS in 2010, the fund was expanded to incorporate new eligible agencies (*see table 1 below*). By 2013, this had grown to eight, all of whom were trusted NGO Partners of Irish Aid and recipients of the Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP). These were Concern, GOAL, Trócaire, World Vision Ireland, Plan International Ireland, Christian Aid Ireland, Oxfam Ireland and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF). Each of these were assessed as having a demonstrated capacity for emergency response and were organisations with which Irish Aid had established a strong and trusted relationship.

Table 1: Breakdown of ERFS funding to NGO Partners from inception to 2018 (figures in € ‘000):

	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	GOAL	IRC	Oxfam Ireland	Plan Int’l Ireland	Médecins sans Frontières	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	Totals
2008	500		500					500		1,500
2009	500		500					500		1,500
2010	400		400			100		400	100	1,400
2011	400		400			100		400	100	1,400
2012	400		400			100		400	100	1,400
2013	400	125	400		125	125	125	400	144	1,844
2014	400	125	400	250	125	250	125	400	250	2,325
2015	600	375	600	250	375	375	375	600	375	3,925
2016	600	375	100	250	375	375	-	600	375	3,050
2017	600	375	-	250	375	375	-	600	375	2,950
2018	600	375	-	250	375	375	-	600	375	2,950
Totals	5,400	1,750	3,700	1,250	1,750	2,175	625	5,400	2,194	24,244

1.2 Objectives of the ERFS Review

The overall objective of the Review is to support the Humanitarian Unit by informing future resource allocation to, and management of, the ERFS scheme. The 7 specific objectives are:

1. To assess whether ERFS has been effective in enabling more timely and effective humanitarian responses;
2. To assess if ERFS is being used by partner NGOs in line with the ERFS Guidelines project selection criteria
3. To solicit feedback from ERFS partners on opportunities to improve the design and management of the scheme;
4. To compare ERFS with other rapid funding models to consider if there are good practices to learn from to improve the design and management of ERFS;
5. To assess whether the formats for proposal, decision making and reporting are adequate;
6. To assess possibilities for expansion of ERFS to other partners;
7. To consider if the ERFS optimally synergises with other Irish Aid humanitarian funding mechanisms.

1.3 Methodology and Limitations of the ERFS Review

The methodology followed during this Review included an examination of all ERFS Guidance documents plus supporting information. An examination was undertaken with 5 other rapid response funding mechanisms and a comparative analysis was conducted. A sample of 2 ERFS projects for each of the 6 current Irish-based NGO Partners was systematically selected and critiqued. Face-to-face meetings were held with all current ERFS partners (the International Rescue Committee was interviewed via Skype for logistical reasons). Meetings were also held with other relevant departments across Irish Aid, plus a number of people from the Humanitarian Unit itself. Interviews were also conducted with 2 key representatives from Irish Embassies, Kenya and Tanzania, that have an active involvement in the oversight of ERFS grants within their region. The detailed methodology followed during this Review is provided in *Annex 4* of this report.

As above, a sample of two applications from each NGO Partner was systematically selected and reviewed. Of the 105 ERFS Applications approved and implemented between 2015 and 2018 inclusive, 12 of these (11%) were thoroughly examined. This assessment was all desk-based and it was outside the scope of this Review to conduct any field-based evaluation or monitoring. As far as possible, all interviews and meetings were conducted face-to-face however for practical reasons, some were conducted virtually. The Review did not meet or assess previous Irish Aid NGO Partners, nor potential new ones, as it was outside the scope of the Terms of Reference.

1.4 Overview of the NGO Partners in Receipt of ERFS Allocations

For the period of this Review, Irish Aid had 7 NGO Partners in receipt of ERFS funding – 6 of whom are Irish-based and have a specific ERFS agreement in place. They are: Christian Aid Ireland, Concern, Oxfam Ireland, Plan International Ireland, Trócaire and World Vision Ireland. The International Rescue Committee has a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Irish Aid which includes a component for ERFS funding. Below is a summary of each NGO Partner.

Christian Aid Ireland

Christian Aid Ireland (CAI) was established in 2007¹ and works across the Island of Ireland with offices in Dublin and Belfast and a staff of 38 people. CAI's works on the thematic areas of governance and HR, violence to peace, gender equality and humanitarian response, with specialist advisors on each area. CAI

¹ Christian Aid International was established in 1940

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

focuses on 20 of the 37 Christian Aid countries globally for development and protracted humanitarian crises however, with a humanitarian mandate, can scale up and respond in any country in time of acute need. CAI's annual income (2018 published accounts) was €11.1million and €117.9million globally for Christian Aid International.

Concern Worldwide

Concern Worldwide (Concern) is a non-governmental, international, humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries. Since its foundation in 1968, Concern has gone on to work in over 50 countries, responding to major emergencies as well as implementing long-term development programmes. The goal of its emergency programme is to fulfil our humanitarian mandate and effectively respond to, and mitigate against, natural and human-influenced disasters. In 2017, Concern responded to 65 emergencies in 24 countries, reaching approximately 12.9 million people, six million of whom were direct beneficiaries.

International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. In 2017, the IRC and our international program partners helped nearly 23 million people access primary health care; provided cash and asset transfers to 179,491 households of refugees and vulnerable people; reached an estimated 2 million people affected by the hunger crises in East Africa, Nigeria and Yemen, and provided 1.14 million children with schooling and other education opportunities. The International Rescue Committee's income in 2017 was over US\$750million and it has operations in 40+ countries.

Oxfam Ireland

Supported by people across the island of Ireland for more than 6 decades, Oxfam Ireland is an independent, secular and not-for-profit organisation. One of 20 Oxfam Affiliates working together as the Oxfam Confederation in more than 90 countries worldwide, Oxfam Ireland is part of a global movement of people which aims to save lives, rebuild communities when disaster strikes and speak out on the injustice of poverty. Oxfam reached 22.3 million people in 2018 including 3.4 million people from its Irish office alone. Oxfam's global humanitarian spend in 2018 was in excess of €290 million.

Plan International Ireland

Plan International is an international charity fighting for the rights of children, particularly girls, who live in the poorest regions of the world. It has a staff of over 10,000 people and global income in excess of US\$1billion. Structurally, it distinguishes between 21 national organisations, where projects, advocacy and influencing strategies are conceived, and 51 country offices, where projects are managed and implemented. Plan International Ireland mainly focus on the West African region, central Africa and the Middle East. Its work comprises child sponsorship, whereby in 2018, some 5,477 children were sponsored by generous Irish people. In 2018 alone, it responded to 11 emergencies across the globe.

Trócaire

Trócaire was established in 1973, by the Catholic Church in Ireland, with the dual mandate of supporting the most vulnerable people in the developing world, and raising awareness of injustice and global poverty in Ireland. During the last three years, Trócaire worked in partnership with local organisations in 23 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East with a staff of over 400 people and a budget of €63 million. Trócaire is a member of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church's global confederation of 165 development agencies with a global reach. During that period, over 2.8 million people directly benefited from Trócaire programmes.

World Vision Ireland

World Vision Ireland is a child-focused international development and humanitarian relief organisation operational in Ireland since 1983. World Vision Ireland has 8 priority countries with multiannual development and humanitarian programmes across East Africa, West Africa and the Middle East. Its key sectors are health and nutrition, education and livelihoods; with child protection and gender equality as cross-cutting themes. Through its emergency relief operations, it supports short-term life-saving interventions, either in its priority countries or in countries within the wider World Vision International network. World Vision Ireland's income in 2017 was €9.2million and globally it was US\$2.76billion for World Vision International.

2.1 Comparative Analysis with Other Rapid Response Funding Mechanisms

The ERFS Review involved a comparative analysis with five other prepositioned or rapid response funding mechanisms: the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF); the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA); DFID's Rapid Response Facility (RRF); Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM); and the Start Fund. The objective of reviewing other rapid funding models was to assess if there are good practices to be learnt from these in order to improve the design and management of the ERFS. Each of the mechanisms assessed are unique however all provide useful insights into how they are activated and managed. In regards to these funds, this Review acknowledges the merits of each however concludes that the ERFS is as good as them, and in certain places, better. An overview of each of the funds is outlined below.

All the funding scheme's assessed offer varying degrees of flexibility to their implementing partners and all are quick with their approval and decision-making processes in comparison to mainstream humanitarian funding channels, e.g. Calls for Proposal. These mechanisms provide funding for responses to acute humanitarian emergencies with a programme period of between 45 days and 6 months, with 3 months being the average as it is with ERFS. Although not activated since 2015, the size and scale of DFID's Rapid Response Facility, its openness to consortia funding applications plus its structured approach to real-time reviews and evaluations for all responses, offer its implementing partners a distinct advantage. Somewhat similar to the Start Fund however much larger in size, the Dutch Relief Alliance offers a decentralised decision-making structure from its donors whereby the members make all the programme implementation and funding decisions and report back to the donors at the end of the financial year. The Danish Emergency Relief Fund is specifically designed for Danish humanitarian organisations who do not have a strategic partnership agreement with the Danish funding authority (Danida) and aim to allocate 80% or more of its fund to local organisations and CBOs. Of the alternative rapid response funding mechanisms assessed as part of this Review, Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism is the most closely aligned to the ERFS. It is a considerably larger fund however its design and decision-making structures are quite similar to those of the ERFS.

The Start Fund is widely recognised as being one of the fastest collectively-owned funding mechanism for humanitarian crises globally. It is a leading enabler of rapid, needs-driven humanitarian response for overlooked crises. Notwithstanding that they are structured quite differently, the ERFS has some comparative advantages over it, most notably the fact that funding is prepositioned with its implementing partners and the probability of securing funding approval through ERFS is considerably higher than from the Start Fund. This was also the view of a number of the ERFS partners, all 7 of whom are also Start Fund members. Two percent of the Start Fund is earmarked for learning which is undertaken in a structured and systematic manner. Consideration for such an approach for the ERFS is referred to below in *section 2.5*.

Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF)

The Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF) was established in 2017 and is a humanitarian funding mechanism managed through a partnership between Save the Children Denmark (SCD), the Start Network and Civil Society in Development (CISU), the latter being the lead organisation. The DERF is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMFA) and received an equivalent budget of €7million in 2017 and €3.5million

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

in 2018 and 2019 respectively. It is anticipating an expansion on this fund moving forward as it establishes itself. The overall objective of the DERF is to provide flexible and rapid humanitarian funding enabling Danish non-Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA) NGOs and CSOs² within three months of the onset of an acute humanitarian crisis to initiate provision of emergency relief to affected populations to meet urgent needs and prevent further loss of life or escalation of suffering. This must be achieved through supporting the humanitarian interventions of Danish non-HPA CSOs who have relevant access and capacities, either through local partners and/or within their own organisation. DERF aims to allocate 80% of its total funding to local organisations and thereby supporting the DMFA with its Grand Bargain and localisation commitments.

The non-HPA partners can apply to the DERF for funding assistance for two modalities. The first is for life-saving interventions following a sudden onset emergency or protracted humanitarian crisis. Interventions must commence within 3 months of the disaster occurring and should be completed within three months thereafter. Maximum funding for this modality is up to 2million DKK (circa. €270,000). The second modality is for Life-Saving & Stabilisation Intervention (responding to rapid or slow onset humanitarian situations). Again, interventions must commence no later than three months after the onset of the humanitarian crisis. Applicants can seek funding up to 5m DKK (circa. €670,000) through this funding modality and programming much be completed within 9 months (with a possible maximum 3-month extension).

The DERF was activated 10 times in 2017, its first year of operation, with approved funds totalling €4.8million across 23 individual agency applications. The average grant in that year was approximately €209,000 with a seven month programming period. It was activated 8 times in 2018 and approved €4.1million worth of funding to 25 partners. The average grant size was circa. €163,000 with a five month programming period. On average, the approval success rate of DERF applications is 60%, i.e. 40% of applications are not funded. DERF have four partners who access the fund regularly which constitutes approximately 65% of the fund's allocation. It also provides smaller grants to diaspora networks which has delivered quality programmes through local organisations and CBOs in difficult to reach areas.

The DERF operating and funding guidelines are available online³ and provide details on what constitutes a crisis and how this is assessed. Once a decision is made to activate a response, a Call for Proposals is made which all non-HPA CSOs can apply. Selection of partners is made by a Grant Committee and is based on an assessment of the organisation's management and operational capacity plus its proposed response plan. It is possible for partners to go through a pre-qualification process whereby the implementing agency is assessed in advance of a crisis and thus speeding up the approval time. Not many Danish organisations have gone through this process as they do not know who the implementing agency will be. The average timeframe from submission of a proposal to approval decision is approximately 3 weeks (pre-qualified organisations can expect the decision is 7 days). In both cases, implementation must commence within 7 days following the funding decision. Danida conducted a review of DERF and noted that it is a flexible funding mechanism. DERF conduct periodic reviews of its programmes including third-party monitoring and evaluation field visits.

Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA)

The Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) was formed in 2015 and is a coalition of 16 Dutch aid organisations⁴ funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The structure of the DRA enables participating NGOs to respond to major international crises in a timely and effective manner. The goal of the DRA is to provide

² Danida has 9 large and trusted humanitarian partners with formal strategic partnership agreements (Humanitarian Partnership Agreements (HPA) and 8 additional partners with Development Cooperation agreements. All 17 partners are ineligible from seeking funds through the DERF mechanism.

³ DERF Operating and Funding Guidelines, available at: <http://cisudk.dk/derf-guidelines-formats>

⁴ The DRA members are: CARE Nederland; Cordaid; Dorcas; ICCO en Kerk in Actie; Oxfam Novib; Plan Nederland; Red een Kind; Save the Children; SOS Kinderdorpen; Stichting Vluchteling; Tear; Terre des Hommes; War Child; War Trauma Foundation; World Vision; and ZOA

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

urgent humanitarian assistance and respond to major international crises in a timely, relevant, effective and efficient manner.

The DRA is managed by a committee made up of a Chair, Vice Chair and an Acute Crisis Coordinator. It is a separate entity from any of the member organisations however it is supported by members on rotation and according to those with the necessary capacity to manage it. The Committee manages and coordinates the DRA activities and liaises between MoFA and DRA member organisations. The DRA responds to humanitarian crises by designing joint responses drawn up and implemented by the members best placed to respond to a crisis.

The MoFA allocate €60million per annum to the DRA members, €18million of which is prepositioned for acute emergencies. This fund is made up of €15million for sudden onset acute emergencies plus €3million for an innovation fund, which combined give the prepositioned funding. The innovation fund is to encourage partners to build on lessons learnt from previous responses and to pilot innovative solutions to crises. The remaining €42million is for protracted disasters and is accessed by making a full application process similar to that of a Call for Proposal. In order to access the prepositioned funding, a four-page concept note must be submitted which summaries the context, information on the affected population, identified needs and proposed response plan, the participating partner organisations and the budget summary. A results framework or detailed budget are not required.

Similar to ERFS, the DRA members are ongoing recipients of MoFA funding and are therefore regularly assessed and trusted. Detailed proposals and implementation plans are prepared and shared for all acute emergencies however this is not a requirement and they do not get assessed on these. After 12 months, the DRA reports to MoFA on all emergencies and how the full €18million was allocated and spent. All DRA members are expected to report via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) which is open-source and they can be questioned on these submissions by the MoFA. There are no restrictions on spending (i.e. ineligible costs) however there are spend variance limits. Given that it is an alliance, the MoFA expect to see collaboration and coordination among the participating members resulting in complementarity of programming with all applications.

The prepositioned component of the DRA funding from the MoFA is designed to be light and quick in its application and decision-making processes. The average turnaround time for approval of acute emergency funding and commitment to commence spending is 5 days (including initial discussion, drafting and approval of concept notes). Programme period is for a maximum of 6 months. The entire portfolio fund is managed by one Senior Programme Officer however he can call on desk officers, finance personnel, embassies and humanitarian advisors to support as and when required.

Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)

Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), albeit a larger funding instrument, is the most closely aligned to Irish Aid's ERFS. The RRM constitutes an important component of Sida's humanitarian funding structure, which aims to provide both predictability (through core support and multi-year agreements) and flexibility and speed (through RRM and Pooled funds). The purpose of the RRM is to enable a needs-based and fast humanitarian response immediately after a severe sudden onset humanitarian crisis or following a significant deterioration of an ongoing crisis. The RRM can, in certain circumstances, also be utilised as a result of a change in humanitarian access. Similar to the ERFS, the strength of the RRM lies in its flexibility and speed as decisions are normally taken within 24 hours following receipt of a funding application.

Currently, Sida has 11 Strategic NGO Partners who are assessed annually and are deemed to have sufficient capacity to implement RRM projects (they must reapply for this funding each year). The RRM scheme is approximately €25million or 6% of Sida's €405million annual humanitarian assistance budget. Similar to ERFS, NGO Partners are preapproved and funding is prepositioned with them in advance of need. Funding is allocated according to the partner's relative size and capacity to spend – the larger Strategic Partners being

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

allocated a more significant portion of the fund (the average is €2million per annum). The Strategic Partners receive their annual allocation within the first quarter of each year and have 12 months to allocate it to appropriate humanitarian responses. Once allocated, the fund is then replenished meaning the partners are unlikely to be without RRM funding. The average size of an RRM Application is €500,000 of which Sida receive approximately 50 submissions per annum. The project implementation period is 6 months or less (extensions are permitted for a further 6 months with sufficient justification however these are rare).

As with ERFS, RRM funding is not a suitable tool for disaster risk reduction, early recovery, capacity development or as seed money for a planned longer-term intervention. Ineligible expenditure criteria are not specified in the relatively short guidance document. As above, Sida aims to provide feedback on RRM Applications (or give a funding decision) within 24 hours of receipt of the full application (to include a completed results framework and detailed budget). The RRM Application Form is similarly straightforward as it is with ERFS and there are no unnecessary demands for data or analysis. An external review of Sida's Humanitarian Assistance was conducted in 2016 noted that the procedures for approving funding applications, including those for RRM, should be simplified and expedited. Following this review, RRM Applications of up to 5million SEK (circa. €475,000) can be approved by two Desk Officers within Sida – the focal points with geographical and organisational responsibility. Amounts above this level are authorised by the Director or Deputy Director level. Sida's Humanitarian Assistance Unit has a team of 30 staff that oversee its annual budget (circa. €405million) which they are seeking to increase.

DFID's Rapid Response Facility (RRF)

In 2011, the British Government conducted a review into its humanitarian emergency response procedures and how Britain's response to man-made and natural disasters could be improved. The RRF was initiated following this review and aims to provide rapid mobilisation of funding to pre-qualified organisations within 72 hours following an emergency. DFID sought applications from organisations who wished to pre-qualify for the RRF which would in turn, enable them to work with partners who were approved to deliver premium quality results and demonstrate value for money to the British taxpayer. This pre-qualification process helps to ensure that the emphasis is on delivery, rather than paperwork, during the first critical stage of a humanitarian response. Applications are used to determine the eligibility as well as the suitability of organisations to receive DFID funding for humanitarian emergencies in the event of RRF activation. DFID's funding guidelines and all accompanying templates (proposal, reporting, financial, results framework, etc) are all available online.

Currently, DFID has 36 large INGO Partners who are pre-qualified and available for selection should an emergency occur and the RRF is activated. Activation is normally initiated by DFID and not by the partners. Since its inception, the RRF has been activated 11 times for predominantly large-scale sudden onset emergencies⁵ with an average budget of circa. £2.5million per appeal. The largest approved 'envelope' was for £8million for Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013. The smallest was for £250,000 for the Bosnia floods in May 2013. Collectively for all eleven emergencies, it has approved 55 separate funding applications totalling £27.4million which gives an average grant size of approximately £500,000. The largest single grant to an INGO partner was to Oxfam for £1.34million for a WASH intervention in South Sudan during the escalation crisis in 2014. The smallest was to MapAction for circa. £19,000 for mapping support in the Iraq IDP crisis also in 2014. The RRF accepts applications from consortia's however this is infrequent (5 of the 55 approved applications have used this modality). In total, £7.6million has been allocated to the five consortium requests which have on average 3 INGO Partners in each application. Of the 36 partners who are pre-approved for RRF funding, approximately two-thirds of them have received funding to date. On average, five INGO's were approved for funding for each of the 11 activated responses. Unlike ERFS, DFID does not preposition RRF funding with any of its pre-qualified partners however commits to releasing funds to them

⁵ RRF activated 11 times: once in 2012: Sierra Leone Cholera; Four times in 2013: India floods and cholera; Typhoon in the Philippines; and floods in Bosnia; Four times in 2014: South Sudan crisis; Iraq IDP crisis; Gaza crisis; and Typhoon in the Philippines; twice in 2015: Cyclone in Vanuatu; and Nepal Earthquake

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

within a 72-hour window. Partners must have proposals completed and submitted within 36 hours following the decision to activate the RRF and notifying partners of this.

The RRF has not been activated since the Nepal earthquake in November 2015. DFID planned on activating the RRF in response to the Sulawesi Earthquake in Indonesia however were requested by the Indonesian Government not to do so. The facility recently underwent a review whereby the systems and procedures were streamlined and the changes incorporated into the latest version of the RRF Guidelines⁶. The RRF has a reserve fund which can be used to respond to small scale emergencies however for most activations, they must seek an 'envelope' from the Ministry. Similar to ERFS, the normal programme implementation period for the RRF is 3 months and their review last year with all RRF partners concluded that this was sufficient. While it is not a prerequisite of funding, they do check to see how many of their partners have undergone Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI) audits. Real-time Evaluations (RTEs) are standard practice for DFID and have been undertaken for all activations. Mid-term and/or final monitoring visits are also conducted. Partners are required to demonstrate that they have been mindful of the CHS and Grand Bargain commitments in the design of projects (DFID's Performance Effectiveness Tracker is a tool specifically designed for monitoring progress toward these targets).

The Start Fund

The Start Network, a network of 42 leading humanitarian NGOs, launched the Start Fund in 2014 with support from DFID and Irish Aid to fill the gap of early funding in humanitarian aid. It does this by enabling member NGOs and their partners to respond early and fast to three categories of crises: underfunded small to medium scale crises; forecasts of impending crises; and spikes in chronic humanitarian crises. Similar to ERFS, the Start Fund aim to give the 'go-ahead' on a response to an implementing agency within 72 hours of the disaster alert and is often among the first of the funding mechanisms to become available. Within this 72 hour period, funds are transferred to the partners (the Start Fund does not preposition funding with any of its partners as is the case with ERFS). The Start Fund was created to allow NGOs to make collective decisions on the basis of needs alone, and respond quickly to under-the-radar emergencies around the world. A defining principle held by all members is that the collective long-term benefits should always outweigh any individual agency's short-term financial benefit. Failure of any Start Fund member to actively engage in Start Fund processes can lead to sanctions by the Executive Board, including loss of membership.

Similar to the structure of the DRA outlined above, the Start Fund is managed by the Start Network and operates under the delegated authority of its donors, i.e. decisions are made by the Start Network alone. The advantage in the Start Network's decision-making comes from its ability to make decisions that are collective, strategic and de-politicised. The governance structure is designed to ensure rigour and impartiality in decision-making around every alert raised and to oversee the performance of the Start Fund as a whole.

Any member can identify a crisis that they think is suitable for the Start Fund. An alert can be raised by one member alone, or jointly by several members and a decision to activate the Start Fund is taken within 24 hours. Full proposals are submitted within the following 24 hours, by hour 48 in effect, and are appraised with decisions made by peer review and funds transferred by hour 72 (this total cycle amounted to 65 hours on average in 2017/18). Selected projects must be started within 7 days and completed within 45 days, and reports are due within 15 days after project completion. One of the drawbacks of the Start Fund is the member agency application success rate – it is not unusual for a dozen or more of the members to submit funding applications to the Start Fund when on average 3 or 4 are approved for funding for each activated response. A distinct advantage of the Start Fund, and something Irish Aid should consider for the next iteration of the ERFS Guidelines, is the Anticipation Window which enables members to carry out advanced preparedness and or early response actions which act upon forecast information to enable individuals,

⁶ DFID's RRF Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/humanitarian-response-funding>

communities and organisations threatened by a hazard to prepare and reduce the likelihood of harm or loss. In essence, this enables members to begin responding before a crisis turns into a disaster.

The Start Fund allocated £8.9million to partners during the 2017/18 financial year⁷ by responding to 44 crises in 31 countries in that year (disbursements for the 2016/17 financial year amounted to £9.6million and £10.3million in 2015/16). Based on these figures, the average activated response in 2017/18 was approximately £200,000 and this can be divided among one or several applying members. All projects are peer-reviewed and learning is fed back to the Network to help improve future responses. The Start Fund Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) team convenes learning exchanges, captures actionable learning and disseminates findings. Project leads and interested stakeholders are encouraged to participate in learning exchanges following all responses (within 20 days following completion of project implementation).

The Start Fund Guidelines and supporting documentation are thorough and available online⁸. It is not common to receive a no-cost-extension and when exceptional circumstances permit, it is only for a matter of weeks. In terms of direct capacity to manage the fund, the core team is five: a manager and four programme officers. There are five anticipation staff who provide part-time support to the Start Fund and work on other matters plus four MEAL staff who also support other funds. In addition, there are five Regional Advisors, who are seconded to work with Start for a few days per month and are permanently employed as staff within member organisations.

2.2 Evidence that ERFS has Enabled Timely and Effective Humanitarian Responses

Having conducted a thorough review of 12 project files, 2 for each of the 6 current Irish-based ERFS NGO Partners, there is compelling evidence that ERFS has enabled timely and effective humanitarian responses to sudden onset disasters or spikes in existing protracted crises. This is also evident from the timely and efficient actions taken by the Humanitarian Unit, in response to ERFS Applications submitted by NGO Partners wishing to draw down on their prepositioned funding.

Of the 12 projects examined, 10 of them were implemented in difficult and complex conflict-affected environments and addressed the needs of extremely vulnerable and at-risk populations. These 10 projects correspond to category one of the INFORM Risk Index – a template used by Irish Aid to map the most vulnerable countries it aims to support. Five of the 12 projects examined were implemented in DRC between 2017 and 2018. The remaining 7 were in South Sudan; Somalia; CAR; Syria; Northern Uganda; Zambia and Bangladesh during the same time period. *Appendix 4* of this report provides a summary of the 12 projects. Collectively, they reached over 115,000 vulnerable people through ERFS funding of approximately €1.32million giving a cost per beneficiary of €11.53. As noted elsewhere in this report, it is not just the vulnerable population in high-profile emergencies that receive assistance through ERFS – NGO Partners also apply for, and are granted, ERFS support for protracted and small-scale crises (see *section 2.4*).

Of the 12 projects selected for examination, 10 of them allocated 85% or higher of the total budget to direct project expenditure lines (the average across all 12 was 88.3%). One of the projects allocated 100% of the ERFS Grant to the cash transfer budget line (all indirect and support costs were covered by the organisation's unrestricted reserves). During interviews, a number of NGO Partners noted that for certain emergencies they are happy to maximise the ERFS funding toward direct project expenditure as they have access to project support and indirect cost lines through other sources (private or otherwise). This demonstrates that ERFS Grants deliver value for money for the Irish taxpayer.

⁷ Start Fund Account Report and Financial Statement – available at: <https://stories.startnetwork.org/startfundannualreport2018/#group-partners-072SVvsABt>

⁸ The Start Fund Guidelines, available at: <https://startnetwork.org/start-fund/guidance>

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

As samples of the type and calibre of ERFS interventions, in 2018, one of the NGO Partners responded to violent clashes in Djugu territory, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where the target population had lost their homes (burnt), sources of livelihoods or household items. The NGO Partner used its ERFS allocation to distribute food and Non-food Items (NFI)s to 800 households. Its post-distribution monitoring data showed that the consumption score of the beneficiary households improved by 82.3% within two weeks after the distributions. Another NGO Partner who also responded to conflict-affected populations in Lomami Province in DRC, provided over 1,000 households with a US\$80 unconditional cash transfer to support urgent needs. The needs assessment identified the exact location due to the lack of humanitarian assistance it had received prior to the NGOs intervention. It also highlighted the high number of unplanned pregnancies of young women and the social exclusion of the mother and new-born by families and communities. In Somalia, following a cholera outbreak in 2017, an NGO Partner requested support from Irish Aid, who quickly approved an ERFS Allocation. This helped alleviate the further loss of life and reduce human suffering through the establishment and management of cholera treatment centres (CTCs).

Appraisal and decision-making process of ERFS Applications

Irish Aid introduced a new grant management system in early 2018 which requires an increased level of compliance and project oversight. As quickly as possible after an NGO Partner submits an ERFS Application (assuming the Desk Officer has already agreed that it will be accepted for consideration), a comprehensive context analysis of the emergency is documented by the Desk Officer. This includes among other things, a review of the country and emergency context, at macro, meso and micro levels – focusing specifically on the location where the NGO Partner proposes its intervention. Reference is often made to Irish Aid Country Categorisation Matrix as well as other secondary sources such as OCHA or other United Nations situation reports. A summation of the intervention is provided, highlighting the intended results the Partner expects to achieve. This quite extensive analysis is sent to the Humanitarian Unit's Deputy Director with a clear recommendation who in turn reviews the Application and Desk Officer's opinion. It is also shared with one other Desk Officer who also adds additional analysis if necessary, along with their recommendation). If the Deputy Director approves, it is elevated to the Director of the Unit, along with full supporting analysis and a recommendation, for a final decision. Given the level of detail required, the number of people involved and the level of compliance entailed with the grant management system, this whole process is managed quickly and effectively.

It is evident that Irish Aid's Humanitarian Unit prioritise ERFS Applications when they are submitted. The target set internally for the full process described above is 2 days which is faster than all other rapid response mechanism considered as part of this Review, including the Start Fund. Of the applications reviewed, some took up to 7 days (including weekend days) to complete due predominantly to delayed responses from the relevant NGO Partner. For any intervention where there is compelling evidence that the proposed intervention is 'life-saving', this process is considerably faster. For example, one NGO Partner who was responding to the urgent needs of conflict-affected populations in Kasai province in DRC received a funding approval decision within 29 hours of submission on the Application Form. While minor questions on this application remained outstanding, the decision was taken to allow the partner to commence activities while these answers were being addressed (this took an additional four days). In this incidence and due to the urgency to commence humanitarian activities, the Deputy Director and one other Desk Officer undertook the appraisal in order to accelerate the process. Irish Aid's NGO Partners should be reminded that having good communications with the relevant Desk Officer as to when the ERFS Application might be submitted is important (as key people within Irish Aid keep space set aside in their dairies when they anticipate an ERFS Application is about to be received).

The process for appraising final reports is equally detailed involving, on average, a four-page document summarising the context in which the programme was implemented, the main achievements, overall performance by the NGO Partner, reporting standards and quality, timing and communications issues and expenditure analysis. A dedicated section covering risk, learning and key issues from the programme are also

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

documented. The response time for Desk Officers to complete the review of final reports and close out an ERFS Grant is less efficient, however, there are mitigating circumstances causing this as discussed below in *section 2.5*. It also appears that not all of these procedures are documented, which given the high levels of staff turnover across the Humanitarian Unit, it is recommended that this is reviewed.

2.3 Benefits and Merits of the ERFS

This current Review predominantly focuses on the funding period 2015-2018 inclusive. In total, Irish Aid’s 6 current Irish-based ERFS NGO Partners⁹ made 105 separate applications for funding during these 4 years. During this same period, a total of €10,825,355 worth of funding was allocated across 34 disaster-affected countries. Over the same 4 years, the average size of an NGO funding application was €103,099¹⁰. Please refer to *Annex 2* (table 3) for funding details of the cumulative 2015-2018 period, plus table 4-7 (also *Annex 2*) provides analysis for each individual year, 2015, 2016, 2016 and 2018 respectively. *Table 2* below summarises the ERFS funding applications for the same 4-year period.

Table 2: Summary of ERFS funding applications for the 2015-2018 period

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015-2018
Number of NGO funding applications	31	25	25	24	105
Total annual ERFS funding from Irish Aid	€2,700,000	€2,700,000	€2,700,000	€2,700,000	€10,800,000
Average size of individual application	€87,097	€108,000	€109,014	€112,500	€103,099
Number of ERFS grants allocated to HPP priority countries by NGO Partners	5	7	9	10	31
Number of countries where ERFS funding was programmed by NGO Partners	14	15	13	14	34 ¹¹

Of the 105 individual ERFS funding applications submitted to Irish Aid for consideration from 2015 - 2018, 60% (63 applications) were for emergencies where 2 or more ERFS partners were responding. On one occasion during the same 4-year period, all 6 partners responded to the same emergency with support from ERFS – Nepal earthquake response in 2015. Five partners used their ERFS allocations to support conflict-affected populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2018. There were 6 occasions when 3 NGO Partners requested to use their ERFS allocations for the same emergency and 17 times with 2 submissions for the same disaster response. This indicates that ERFS is being used by partners for its intended purpose by responding to sudden onset disasters or spikes in an existing crisis, and not filling gaps in their respective funding portfolios.

Following the launch of the ERFS in 2007 with three of Irish Aid’s most significant humanitarian NGO Partners, an external review of the fund was undertaken in 2010. This concluded that the scheme ‘*was widely welcomed as being innovative and original in nature*’ and ‘*as a positive example of GHD, providing flexible, pre-positioned, relevant funds that support partner agencies to respond to a wide range of smaller to large scale sudden onset humanitarian crises. The ERFS is also highly visible despite being a relatively small funding modality within Irish Aid*’. Nine years later, after being activated more than 200 times, in over 40 disaster-affected countries and provided humanitarian funding in excess of €24million to NGO Partners, this Review upholds these same conclusions. This is evidenced through a study of other leading rapid response funding mechanisms by primary institutional donors, interviews with all current NGO Partners and an examination of how ERFS Applications are applied in practice.

⁹ Christian Aid Ireland, Concern, Oxfam Ireland, Plan International Ireland, Trócaire and World Vision Ireland

¹⁰ In 2015, NGO Partners submitted 31 separate applications for €2,700,000 worth of funding giving an average request of €87,097. In 2018, the number of applications was 24 for the same funding level giving an average request of €112,500.

¹¹ Note this figure is not cumulative as a number of counties have emergency response programmes supported through ERFS grants by one or more ERFS partners

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

The Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HAWG) submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence¹² noted ‘the ERFS is an excellent tool which strongly supports recipient agencies to respond to emergencies in a rapid and flexible manner. It provides seed capital for interventions which is essential in leveraging more prolonged donor funding. The focus on un-earmarked funding allows partners to decide on the appropriate sector and region in their response. The scheme reinforces the mutual trust between Irish Aid and NGOs’.

The OCED Development Co-operation Peer Review Paper on Ireland 2014¹³, noted that ‘Ireland understands the need to adapt its tools to the context, and thus has a flexible and broad humanitarian toolbox to fit different contexts and partners. Policy commitments to be a good partners and followed through, with predictable, flexible and timely funding, active and open discussions, and an appropriate administrative burden for all partners. Ireland also plays an active role in donor co-ordination, advocating for better humanitarian donorship and promoting more joined up responses’.

As mentioned in the previous section, NGO Partners have sought support, and predominantly been granted it, for small protracted crises in addition to large-scale sudden onset disasters which attract substantial media attention. This media attention is often important for triggering significant humanitarian funding, however, mainstream media only tend to focus on a relatively small number of larger-scale crises. Similarly, the speed of mainstream humanitarian funding is often slow and this inhibits NGOs’ capacity to respond to crises of all sizes and scales. Yet a great proportion of human suffering and loss occurs in small-scale events at the local level where the media have little or no interest, and prior to the mainstream humanitarian funding being mobilised. This is where the ERFS has its greatest impact – by supporting its trusted NGO Partners to mobilise quickly through prepositioned rapid response funding aimed primarily at providing life-saving assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people on our planet. Three of the 12 applications reviewed used cash-based programmes activities as part of the ERFS response. NGO Partners also noted Irish Aid’s support for this activity which is welcomed and in line with Ireland’s Grand Bargain¹⁴ commitments.

When NGO Partners were questioned what they appreciated most about ERFS, common responses included the element of certainty surrounding emergency funding and that it is prepositioned; that Irish Aid is predominantly responsive and positive to requests to access NGO Partner’s ERFS allocations; the ERFS Application Form is simple without an excessive request for data; and the fund is not geographically restricted. NGO Partners also appreciated the flexibility of the fund and that Irish Aid are willing, when substantiated with justifiable reasons, to allow potential underspends to be carried forward to future responses (from the files reviewed, this occurs infrequently, i.e. less than 10% of all applications reviewed reported an underspend). Some of the NGO Partners could not recall an experience where an ERFS Application was rejected or significantly delayed by Irish Aid¹⁵. They also noted that the ERFS funding (and stocks discussed in *section 2.6* below) allows for ‘first early wins’ in an emergency response and provides the team with the confidence and momentum often leading to larger-scale humanitarian operations.

The amalgamated budget and financial reporting template is also straightforward and effective. The narrative reporting is not complicated and does not request any information which could be considered unusual or beyond what any other donor might request. This will assist Irish Aid should it move towards a harmonised reporting model with other donors as discussed in *section 2.5* below.

¹² Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HAWG) Submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence October 2017 – Review of Irish Aid programme

¹³ OCED Development Co-operation Peer Review Paper on Ireland 2014. Available at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-ireland-2014_9789264225114-en#page83

¹⁴ The Grand Bargain is an agreement between the biggest donors and humanitarian aid organisations. It aims to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.

¹⁵ In excess of one week and after all information requested from the NGO Partner was provided.

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

Of the 105 ERFS Applications implemented by the current Irish-based NGO Partners between 2015 and 2018, 44 (42%) of them resulted in the agency building on the response initiated with ERFS funding. Ten of these ERFS Applications (9.5%), resulted in NGO Partners adding the country to its HPP application in subsequent years. Eleven of the applications (10.5%), resulted in the NGO Partner commencing new operations in a new country (or a country that they have not operated in for a considerable length of time). This indicates that NGO Partners are not using their ERFS allocation as funding gaps in regular on-going projects.

As mentioned above, most Partners could not cite a recent example where an ERFS Application was rejected by Irish Aid. One Partner was approached by Irish Aid to submit a proposal for a mudslide response in Sierra Leone in 2017 however after appraisal of the ERFS Application, it was rejected. The same Partner was also advised by the Humanitarian Unit to apply through ERFS to support the distribution costs of NFIs received through the Rapid Response Initiative (RRI). This also was rejected following appraisal of the Application Form. Both these cases appear to be isolated incidents, as acknowledged by the Partner. There is no evidence of any such incidents with the current Desk Officers within Irish Aid.

All six NGO Partners undertook either real-time evaluations (RTE), real-time reviews, or post implementation evaluations (internal and external) for some of their larger humanitarian responses. While the impact of rapid funding is vaguely referenced in these reports, there is no specific mention of ERFS (or any other rapid response funding mechanism).

The Humanitarian Unit has recommended an increase of the size of ERFS pot in 2019 demonstrating its commitment and satisfaction with the fund. All NGO Partners noted their satisfaction with the current Humanitarian Unit team citing examples to substantiate this. However, there are clear turnover and retention issues which should be reviewed (discussed in more detail in *section 2.5*) as this has a direct consequence to the management of the fund and relationship with NGO Partners. The creation of group email addresses, for example erfs@dfa.ie and humanitarianngoteam@dfa.ie, has helped ensure that the Unit is not dependent on any one individual and that other people can pick up any urgency calls for action, as described above.

2.4 Compliance with ERFS Guidelines by NGO Partners

This Review involved an assessment of 2 completed projects, which were systematically selected¹⁶, and contained all documentation relating to ERFS projects for each of the 6 current Irish-based ERFS Partners. This includes a review of all formal communications (emails), application submissions including appendices, reports, follow-up queries and responses plus the internal reports, emails and analysis completed by the Desk Officer and management team from the Humanitarian Unit as part of the grant management process. This section of the report provides an opinion on how NGO Partners adhere to the existing ERFS Guidelines. In *section 2.5* below, comments are provided on the ERFS Guidelines more broadly in addition to the internal processes followed by Irish Aid in reaching an ERFS funding decision. Suggested recommendations for future iterations of the ERFS Guidelines are also provided.

Objectives

All 12 emergency projects examined fulfilled the objectives set by ERFS which is *'to promote early action and response to time-critical requirements based on demonstrable needs in sudden onset humanitarian crises or spikes in an existing protracted crisis'*. As covered in more detail in *section 2.2* above, there is compelling evidence that ERFS is having a tangible impact on the lives of many extremely vulnerable people living in some of the most impoverished and crisis-affected countries on our planet. This is attributed to the flexible and timely ERFS funding mechanism and the collaborative partnership between Irish Aid's Humanitarian Unit and its trusted NGO Partners who deliver demonstrable results.

¹⁶ The first ERFS programme applications for all six Irish-based partners from 2017 and 2018 were selected for review. For two partners where their final report from 2018 was outstanding, two projects from 2017 were selected

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

In the majority of cases, NGO Partners are using their ERFS allocation in order to immediately respond to identified needs in countries where they already have a presence or access through an implementing partner. The ERFS Guidelines also allow partners to use this funding to undertake rapid needs assessments or to conduct a scoping exercise to determine if a more substantive humanitarian response is warranted. Most NGO Partners tend to have a tentative response plan already formulated prior to making the initial contact with Irish Aid which is then formalised into a 2-page Application Form within a matter of days following approval from Irish Aid to proceed to this step.

Eligible Agencies and Countries

All NGO Partners were compliant with the eligible agency criteria as stipulated in Irish Aid's ERFS Guidelines. This requires that applicant agencies have an established funding relationship for humanitarian sudden-onset responses with Irish Aid. All six Irish-based NGO Partners have Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP) agreements in place with Irish Aid, and the International Rescue Committee has a separate Strategic Partnership Agreement which includes a provision for ERFS funding. All seven are subject to periodic field-based monitoring visits¹⁷, formal bilateral meetings and other forms of communication aimed at determining the respective partners capacity and competence to deliver effective and principle-based humanitarian response programmes.

While outside the remit of this Review to conduct any field-based evaluation on the implementation of an ERFS project, there is evidence from the secondary information provided that an appropriate response was developed for the respective emergency and that this was carried out efficiently and effectively by the respective NGO Partner. All six NGO Partners are either independently certified or verified for CHS through HQAI, either directly or through their umbrella organisations¹⁸, or have undertaken the CHS self-assessment process. This demonstrates that the assistance they provide is done so in a principled and needs-based manner. For the 12 projects assessed, all partners had the necessary legal authority to operate in the respective country concerned, as required by ERFS Guidelines.

Of the 34 countries where ERFS funding was allocated over the past four years 2015-2018 inclusive (see *annex 2* for details), 23 of these countries were from categories 1 and 2 as per the INFORM Risk Index¹⁹. Two, five and two countries had at least one ERFS project in categories three, four and five respectively during the same period. Only 2 countries which had ERFS projects, Indonesia and Serbia, were not listed on the INFORM Risk Index however are registered as developing countries by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. Both were in response to justifiable needs and are consistent with the ERFS Guidelines – the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami response in Indonesia which Plan International Ireland and World Vision Ireland responded to with support from their ERFS allocations. Irish Aid supported World Vision Ireland to respond to the migrant crisis in Serbia in 2015 with the support of an ERFS allocation.

Funding Criteria

The ERFS Guidelines highlight four key criteria which must be satisfied in order to secure a favourable funding decision. Given the flexibility of the fund and positive relationship Irish Aid have with all pre-qualified partners, this criteria is appropriate and reasonable. ERFS funding should focus on essential humanitarian activities where there is a compelling and overwhelming need to provide funding in order to save and protect lives. It is also intended that ERFS will largely be used by NGO Partners as catalytic funding to jumpstart the most urgent humanitarian activities. All 12 projects assessed satisfied these criteria as evidenced in *section 2.2* above.

¹⁷ From both the Humanitarian Unit and Civil Society and Development Education Unit in Irish Aid as well as through the relevant Irish Embassies and field-based Humanitarian Advisors

¹⁸ Through HQAI (<https://hqai.org/>), Christian Aid International, Concern Worldwide and Oxfam are certified, and Plan International is Verified. Trócaire and World Vision International are currently pursuing the CHS self-assessment process.

¹⁹ All twelve countries from category one had at least one ERFS project during the 2015-2018 period; 11 of the 16 category 2 countries received an ERFS allocation at least once during the same period.

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

All seven NGO Partners interviewed have their own internal criteria which they ensure are satisfied prior to making any contact with Irish Aid with a request to access their ERFS allocation. This includes an assessment of internal indicators on the severity of the disaster and the organisation's appropriate response. Other key factors include access to the disaster-affected population; the response of other organisations; availability of funding (beyond ERFS); capacity to respond effectively including the availability of appropriate staff. All NGO Partners have internal unrestricted funding sources which they also consider against these same criteria. Most NGO Partners appear to have self-regulation mechanisms in place to help them ensure they utilise their ERFS allocation wisely, i.e. in terms of not spending it all on one emergency and holding some in reserve should an emergency occur towards the latter part of the year.

At the point of project initiation, 10 of the 12 projects reviewed had a 3-month implementation period, one was for 2 months and one was for 4. This is consistent with the ERFS Guidelines which state that '*activities proposed for funding should generally have a timescale for implementation of three months, and in exceptional circumstances up to a maximum of six months duration will be considered*'. The Guidelines list a number of ineligible expenditures, all of which were adhered to by NGO Partners assessed. These above two points are referenced again in *section 2.5* below.

Application Procedures

The internal procedures Irish Aid follow in appraising an ERFS Grant and the processes it undertakes in reaching a funding decision are discussed in *section 2.5* below. This section focuses on how the application procedures are followed by NGO Partners and Irish Aid – steps 1, 2 and 3 per the ERFS Guidelines. All NGO Partners interviewed noted their appreciation for the prompt response by Irish Aid when dealing with their ERFS Applications. They all have an appreciation for the level of accountability required given that it is taxpayers money that is being sought. While the ERFS Guidelines do not specify a specific turnaround time for approval of applications (step 2), it is evident from the files reviewed that Irish Aid reacts quickly and effectively to such requests. For example, one NGO Partner submitted an application for a cash transfer project in Lomami Province in DRC which was reviewed by the Humanitarian Unit Desk Officer and elevated to the Deputy Director with detailed supporting analysis within 21 hours of receipt from the NGO. Following the Deputy Director's review, the application required further clarification from the partner which was provided 36 hours later, at 15.34pm on a Friday evening. Within one hour, approval on a funding decision was sought from the Director of the Humanitarian Unit who granted this later that evening. On Saturday afternoon, the Deputy Director notified the NGO Partner directly of their authorisation to proceed with the emergency operation. This process, from the initial phone call (step 1) to the final approval decision (step 2) took five and a half days. The results framework and detailed budget were submitted 10 days later (step 3). These were reviewed, with points of clarification being sent to the NGO Partner eight days later which were satisfactorily met 12 days thereafter.

Most of the project files reviewed seeking ERFS funding decisions demonstrated a similarly quick and decisive action by the Humanitarian Unit in Irish Aid. The exceptions to this predominantly related to the time required by NGO Partners to respond to queries on the Application Form (which must be satisfied prior to a funding decision being granted). NGO Partners generally acknowledged that this aspect of the process has improved greatly over the past few years. Most could cite examples when the opposite was the case however these were three years or older.

While it is not specified in the ERFS Guidelines, it is implied and generally understood by most NGO Partners that the detailed guidance relevant to HPP programmes is also applicable to ERFS Grants. For example, the requirement that budget spending can have a maximum 10% variance is not covered in the ERFS Guidelines. This should be clarified in the next iteration of the ERFS Guidelines. The Guidelines also specify that all NGO Partners will receive feedback on their applications however this does not appear to happen systematically.

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

No Cost Extensions and Reporting Requirements

Four of the 12 projects examined required a no-cost-extension which was quickly approved by the Humanitarian Unit after consideration. These were requested by the same two partners and most were for justifiable reasons. As referenced above in *section 2.3*, NGO Partners indicated their appreciation for the swift approval of such requests by Irish Aid. There is no recent evidence of an NGO Partner having an NCE request disallowed (some NGO Partners commented that they themselves reject these requests from the field and thus avoid having to approach Irish Aid in the first place).

For the most part, the standard of reporting with 10 of the 12 projects examined was good. Accounting for the NCE requests above, all bar 2 of the projects examined finished on time and to a satisfactory standard. Seven of the reports were submitted on the due date, 3 were early and 2 substantially late (discussed separately below). Five of the 12 projects exceeded their intended beneficiary numbers, 6 achieved them and one was marginally below for justifiable reasons.

Two of the financial reports were submitted with a small rounding difference and another where the financial report was inconsistent with the narrative. While these are relatively minor and isolated incidents, it does indicate a lack of attention to detail prior to submission of reports on the part of the NGO Partner. As these are short term responses, typically not longer than 3 months with small amounts of funding, the final narrative report should be clear, concise and easily understood to reflect this.

Evidence of where ERFS Guidelines were not adhered to by NGO Partners

There were 2 examples (from the 12 examined) where the quality of grant management and project oversight by the same NGO Partner was below an acceptable standard. As noted in *section 2.2* above, the majority of ERFS projects were undertaken in difficult and challenging environments so this is not a satisfactory justification. Both projects were submitted late, one over 5 months late, and after a number of reminders from Irish Aid. The NCE request for one of the projects was made 6 weeks after the implementation period had expired at a time when the projects progress-to-date was significantly behind schedule. When the final reports were eventually submitted, there is evidence of expenditure being allocated to unapproved budget lines, inconsistencies between the budget and the narrative and generally not to the standard expected. The proposal for one of these two projects was submitted with inconsistencies and track-changes (2 of the 12 projects appraised for this Review had this basic error). For these specific grants, the communications between the NGO Partner and Irish Aid was poor and it appears the NGO in question was not in control of how Irish Aid's funding was being utilised. The NGO Partners received a stern warning from the Director of the Humanitarian Unit and has since taken corrective action to avoid a future reoccurrence.

Although this is an exception to the norm, this is not an isolated incident and other NGO Partners noted earlier times when the quality of their reports was less than satisfactory and this was communicated directly by Irish Aid (this is not to question the quality or impact of the project's delivery). Partners appreciate the transparent feedback and there is evidence to show how standards have greatly improved. For the examples cited above, there appear to be two main reasons why this happened. Firstly, the limited human resource capacity of the NGO Partner to satisfactorily oversee and manage the grant²⁰. The second and perhaps more concerning challenge is that some of the NGO Partners, particularly those who are members of larger federations with no direct or indirect line management to the field-based team, periodically add their ERFS allocation to multi-donor pooled responses where they might have limited control over how these funds are

²⁰ The six NGO Partners have varying degrees of capacity, at HQ level, to support and oversee their respective humanitarian programmes. Without naming the agencies, dedicated personnel numbers are 25; 16; 9; 4; 2 and one organisation has just one person overseeing all its humanitarian programmes. At times of high demand, all six organisations can draw on resources from across the organisation, or externally, to add capacity as and when required.

used²¹. This is especially true when the humanitarian programme is designed around several large grants, some of which are not confirmed when the decision to include ERFS is made. As in the examples above, this can lead to the delayed implementation of the ERFS component of the programme and situation where the country-based team priorities larger grants at the expense of smaller ones. This is not what the ERFS is designed for nor where it can offer much added value. Consideration should be given to the model followed by the HPP programme whereby a programme's performance is rated and fund resources are allocated on this basis, e.g. Resource Allocation Model (RAM).

2.5 Possible Opportunities to Further Improve ERFS

As described in this report, the ERFS is a valuable and efficient funding instrument which has helped accomplish considerable achievements over the past decade or so. Notwithstanding this, a number of suggested improvements are put forward for consideration for the next iteration of the ERFS Guidelines.

For the most part, communications between Irish Aid's Humanitarian Unit and its NGO Partners is constructive and effective. One area for possible improvement is to hold joint learning and review meetings at least annually or whenever three or more of the partners allocate ERFS to the same emergency response. Over the past four years, this has happened eight times²². Twice in the same period, five or more NGO Partners responded to the same crisis - all six used their ERFS allocation for the Nepal earthquake in 2015 and five of them in support of conflict-affected populations in the DRC in 2018. Holding 360-style learning and review consultations following such events presumably is not overly burdensome on either Irish Aid or any of the NGO Partners. For those NGO Partners who did not directly respond to the specific crisis, it would still be a valuable learning opportunity to better understand the ERFS modality and further develop their relationship with Irish Aid, and vice versa.

One of the Grand Bargain's commitments is to harmonise and simplify reporting requirements to donors so the process becomes simpler, more efficient, and less bureaucratic. To work toward this commitment, a number of donors and NGOs agreed to pilot a new reporting template, known as the '8+3 template'²³. The final report on the outcome of this pilot is not due until later this year however as part of this Review, Irish Aid's NGO Partners were in favour of the initiative. Anything that will simplify and ease the administrative burden for both parties is to be welcomed.

As noted earlier in this report, the processes followed by key staff from the Humanitarian Unit regarding the appraisal and approval of ERFS Applications and reports are thorough however these procedures are not fully documented. Given the high level of turnover within the Unit, this should be rectified. Similarly, the collaboration between the Humanitarian and Civil Society and Development Education Units is efficient and effective however this is possibly due in part to the productive working relationship between the two Deputy Directors of the respective Units. With the likelihood that both employees will proceed to other positions during the year, these procedures should also be documented thereby supporting the continued achievements of their respective Units. The procedures governing how the Humanitarian Unit engages with Irish Embassies regarding ERFS Applications exist however could be strengthened as mentioned below.

Partners were divided on the level of detail the ERFS Guidelines should have. Some were in favour of these being more descriptive which would offer greater clarity to country teams who prepare the initial

²¹ One Partner noted that in the initial phase of the Yemen response, their ERFS allocation was the first to be secured and hugely significant at the time. However, within a number of months (when it came to report writing), it was considered insignificant by the country team who were by this stage managing a €28million multi-donor, multi-sector, multi-geographical response.

²² ERFS has been activated 8 times by three or more NGO Partners for the same disaster response. Twice in 2018 (conflict response in DRC and food security crisis in Ethiopia); Three times in 2017 (cholera in Somalia, conflict crisis in South Sudan and floods in Bangladesh); Once in 2016 (drought response in Zimbabwe); and twice in 2015 (floods in Burundi and earthquake response in Nepal).

²³ Harmonising Reporting Pilot – Mid-term Review, Global Public Policy Institute, July 2018

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – March 2018

application, supporting annexes and final report. Others were opposed to this and feared it might slow down the process and therefore remove the core essence of the fund, i.e. its rapid response and flexibility elements. Having conducted this Review including an analysis of other rapid response funds, any changes to the ERFS Guidelines which slow down the process should be discouraged. Most NGO Partners would welcome clarity on some of the ineligible expenditures from the Guidelines, i.e. visibility costs when branding is of benefit to Irish Aid or insurance costs. Also, reasonable international travel should be allowable where it is deemed essential for the successful implementation of the project. This restriction is not currently consistent as it is allowable for some NGO Partners however not all.

As noted above in *section 2.1* above, a comparative analysis of a number of different rapid response mechanisms was undertaken. The Start Fund is commonly believed to be among the most progressive and proactive emergency funding mechanisms in existence for the relief phase of disasters. Whilst different in its design and management, this Review found that ERFS is as good as it, and in places, better. One area however where the Start Fund has a particular strength is with its Anticipation Window. This enables members to carry out advanced preparedness and/or early response actions and thereby help avoid a hazard becoming a disaster. The ERFS Guidelines prohibit preparedness activities as these are funded under the HPP scheme. However, HPP which is a progressive and effective funding mechanism in its own right, is not a rapid response modality capable of reacting quickly to sudden onset hazards and disasters.

Whilst not a significant or material change from its current structure, consideration could be given to the possibility of amending the ERFS implementation and reporting parameters, both of which are 3 months respectively, to a six-month total timeframe. This will increase the level of flexibility NGO Partners have for project implementation and remove the requirement for a number of NCE requests.

Whilst the humanitarian Unit is efficient and effective at appraising and approving ERFS Applications as discussed in *section 2.2* above, there is less evidence of this when responding to final reports and reverting to NGO Partners with comments and feedback. Most NGO Partners were able to cite examples when they received follow up questions on ERFS reports up to one year after submission, or in some cases even longer. Having met with many of the team in the Humanitarian Unit, there is certainly no lack of commitment and enthusiasm for the work at hand. It is evident that the volume of work managed by the Unit, in addition to the increased level of compliance, is not adequately married with the required level of human resource to do this work efficiently and effectively. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the high level of staff turnover, coupled with some new entrants lacking the contextual knowledge enabling them to get up-to-speed quickly, only compounds this problem.

The Dóchas HAWG submission (October 2017) to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence²⁴ recommended the following: *'The speed of approval is key to the value of ERFS and the timeliness of the approval process should be evaluated. Given the usefulness of this funding instrument, access to the fund should be made available to a larger number of NGOs, and the amount of funding allocated to ERFS should be doubled'*. This sentiment was echoed during all face-to-face meetings with the NGO Partners who supported a significant increase in the size of the ERFS fund (whilst retaining the core essence of the rapid response component as discussed in *section 2.2* above). Based on the considerable impact ERFS has had to date and given Ireland's commitment to increasing the aid budget and accelerating its 0.7% target of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030, this would represent a comparatively small investment for a significant return. Whilst not diminishing the impact of Ireland's contribution to Yemen or the humanitarian needs in that country, the allocation to the Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) exceeded €6.2million in 2018²⁵, more than doubling the allocation to ERFS in that year.

²⁴ Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HAWG) Submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence October 2017 – Review of Irish Aid programme

²⁵ Information relating to the Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) is available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/overview>

2.6 Synergies with Other Irish Aid Funding Mechanisms

Irish Aid has two core multi-annual funding modalities for both development and humanitarian programmes, Programme Gant (PGII) and Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP)²⁶. Since 2017 and in line with Ireland's commitments to the Grand Bargain, Irish Aid has made efforts to merge these two funding streams by developing combined guidelines, application forms including appendices plus narrative and financial reporting templates. As noted in the previous section of this report, there is good collaboration and synergy between with Humanitarian and Civil Society and Development Education Units of Irish Aid. Deputy Directors and Desk Officers from these units support each other with the appraisal of applications to ensure consistency and fairness with scoring and awarding of funds. Joint monitoring visits to partner countries will commence in 2019 further developing these synergies. Wherever possible and feasible, country programmes and specific locations for review at part of these joint monitoring visits should factor in locations that are or were in receipt of ERFS funding.

Last year, the Rapid Response Initiative (RRI), managed by the Humanitarian Unit in Irish Aid, deployed four consignments carrying 344 tonnes of relief items to help an estimated 48,539 beneficiaries. These were airlifted to Niger, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Burundi, all of which were distributed by three of Irish Aid's ERFS NGO Partners. This had a total approximate value of €2million²⁷ giving an average cost of €41 per beneficiary reached. In 2017, seven consignments transporting 357 tonnes of relief items were distributed to 167,650 beneficiaries and had a total approximate value of €2.1million (the average cost per beneficiary reached was €12). Irish Aid also deployed 31 humanitarian experts as 'surge capacity' to UN partners' response operations in 16 countries. The Rapid Response Corps (RRC) currently comprises over 80 experts with specialised skills in logistics, engineering, water and sanitation, humanitarian coordination, protection and other areas.

There is evidence of a good collaborative working relationship between the Irish Embassies and the Humanitarian Unit. For example, for two separate disasters in Kenya in 2017 and 2018 which one of the NGO Partners responded to²⁸, there was constructive coordination between the Humanitarian Unit, the Irish Embassy in Kenya and the NGO Partner at field-level. However, it is understandable that the Embassies are not always in a position to review ERFS Applications and provide input in a timely manner. It is also evident that this input is not always consistent, i.e. some applications are heavily critiqued by Embassy personnel, resulting in additional work for the Humanitarian Unit and NGO Partner in particular, while others are not appraised at all. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for engagement on ERFS Applications by Embassies should also specify that responses are required within 24 hours maximum to avoid delays on funding decisions and commencement of humanitarian activities. The value-added of engaging the Irish Embassy's is that they have access to information and networks beyond those of the Humanitarian Unit or NGO Partner.

A mapping exercise setting out the Irish Embassies and Countries of Secondary Accreditation is recommended. This will help ensure that Desk Officers within the Humanitarian Unit know which Irish Embassy they should make contact with for any given ERFS Application. It will also enable better coordination of information and avoid duplication of efforts between the Humanitarian Unit Desk Officers and the Embassies. The Embassies also indicated that they would appreciate if the final ERFS report was shared (to keep them informed on how Irish taxpayers money was spent and to support possibly field-based monitoring visits should the opportunity arise).

²⁶ The PGII is Irish Aid's largest civil society fund and is used to support long-term development interventions. The HPP provides funding for humanitarian interventions in situations of protracted, predictable and recurring crises. The PG II has a five-year programme cycle from 2017-2021. In 2017, the HPP grants moved to a three-year cycle to synchronise with the remainder of the PG cycle (2019-2021).

²⁷ This figure of €2million includes the costs of the stocks, air cargo and shipment, handling costs and other related charges

²⁸ Two separate ERFS responses, both in the Rift Valley, Western Kenya – a drought response in 2017 and floods in Kuruturi in 2018

Irish Aid's last Call for Proposal was over three years ago in response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. Given that this is one of the core humanitarian funding models for NGO Partners who are ineligible for ERFS and HPP schemes, consideration should be given to activating this funding modality more frequently. These are labour intensive processes to apply for and administer affecting both Irish Aid and NGO Partners however are also a good opportunity to assess the capacity and competence of potential new ERFS (and HPP) partners to deliver efficient and effective aid programmes.

3.1 Assessment of ERFS against DAC Criteria

Whilst not all directly relevant to this Review, the analysis is framed using the Disaster Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance/appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, connectedness, coherence, coverage and impact²⁹. Some comments refer to the ERFS mechanism directly, whilst some analysis refers to the contribution ERFS has had on NGO Partner's programmes.

Relevance/appropriateness: The Review found that ERFS is a relevant and appropriate funding instrument which continues to achieve the objective for which it was established. The mechanism has enabled Irish Aid's humanitarian NGO Partners to quickly respond to sudden onset disasters through the prepositioned and flexible structure. The Review also found that all 12 of the ERFS projects examined designed responses that were appropriate to the identified needs and 7 of them were implemented by local downstream partners.

Efficiency: While it is difficult to draw conclusions as to the efficiency of ERFS without conducting field-based research (which is outside the scope of this Review), there is related evidence demonstrating this criterion. As discussed above in *section 2.2*, of the 12 projects examined as part of this Review, collectively they reached over 115,000 vulnerable people through ERFS funding of approximately €1.32million giving a cost per beneficiary of €11.53

Effectiveness: Central to the criterion for effectiveness is the principle of timeliness and the extent to which this enables the purpose to be achieved. This review examined the reaction times of other rapid response funding mechanisms and concludes that ERFS is as quick, if not quicker, than other similar funding models. As noted in *section 2.2* above, Irish Aid's internal approval target is 48 hours and in most cases, this is achieved. One of the 12 projects examined was appraised and approved within 29 hours. Others took up to 7 days however the majority of these cases were due to the NGO providing clarifications on the ERFS Application.

Impact: The speed of mainstream humanitarian funding is often slow and this inhibits NGOs' capacity to respond to crises of all sizes and scales. A great proportion of human suffering and loss occurs in small-scale events at the local level where the media have little or no interest, and prior to the mainstream humanitarian funding being mobilised. This is where the ERFS has its greatest impact – by supporting its trusted NGO Partners to mobilise quickly through prepositioned rapid response funding aimed primarily at providing life-saving assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people on our planet (see *section 2.3* above for further details).

Connectedness: While the ERFS is specifically designed for short-term essential humanitarian life-saving interventions, the Application Form specifically requires NGO Partners to provide information relating to the project's sustainability. This Review found that most applications were able to demonstrate this satisfactorily. As noted above in *section 2.3* above, 42% of the 105 applications analysed as part of this Review resulted in the agency building on the response initiated with ERFS funding. Ten of these ERFS Applications (9.5%), resulted in NGO Partners adding the country to its HPP application in subsequent years.

²⁹ OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

Eleven of the applications (10.5%), resulted in the NGO Partner commencing new operations in a new country (or a country that they have not operated in for a considerable length of time).

Coherence: All ERFS eligible NGO Partners underwent a pre-approval process in order to gain access to the fund. In addition, all of their ERFS Applications were also appraised against set standards and procedures as documented in *sections 2.4 and 2.4* above. These 2-page Application Form has a dedicated section for risk identification and mitigate, all of which helps ensure coherence. In addition and also noted above, are the internal and external accountability and quality assurance standards that each of Irish Aid's NGO Partners has in place. This Review puts forward a recommendation for continuous learning, particularly in the aftermath to large scale emergencies, when a majority of the NGO Partners participate.

Coverage: The ERFS Guidelines are not geographically restrictive and Irish Aid's NGO Partners have applied for, and received approval, for rapid response funding in over 40 countries since the scheme was established a decade ago. During the 4 year period which this Review focused on, there were 105 approved ERFS Applications which were programmed in 34 different countries. Of the 12 projects which were examined in detail, 10 of them were implemented in complex, conflict-affected countries (see *section 2.4* above for details). This Review also notes that while a considerable proportion of ERFS allocations are programmed in under-developed or conflict-affected countries³⁰, Irish Aid's NGO Partners have also successfully secured ERFS funding for countries in transition that have suffered a sudden shock. Funding has also been secured through ERFS by NGO Partners for small-scale, low-profile emergencies in addition to those that attract significant media attention.

3.2 Assessment of ERFS Against Grant Management Best Practice Criteria

Having conducted a thorough review of the ERFS and its application by NGO Partners, in addition to performing a comparative analysis of other similar rapid response funding mechanisms, this Review concludes that the ERFS is compliant with grant management best practice as evidenced below. It also concludes that ERFS is compliant with all of the relevant Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Principles³¹.

Objectives: The objective of the ERFS is clear, straightforward and compatible with Ireland's new policy for international development '*A Better World*'. This recently launched policy aims to enable Ireland to better deal with humanitarian crises so it can provide rapid responses to sudden-onset crises, while at the same time developing a more comprehensive Irish response to peace and security challenges. One of the initiatives which this policy aims to achieve is to strengthen Ireland's response to humanitarian crises and increase its funding and capacity for rapid response to sudden onset crises. ERFS is also compatible with all four objectives as stated in Ireland's Humanitarian Assistance Policy, particularly objective one which aims '*to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance in a way that is predictable and flexible to respond to sudden onset, protracted and forgotten humanitarian crises*'.

Consistency: Irish Aid introduced an eight-step standardised approach to grant management in early 2018. This Review conducted a systematic examination of 12 separate ERFS Applications to include how each was appraised by the Humanitarian Unit. The Review concludes that these were managed effectively and there was consistency in the approach. A suggested recommendation is that these processes are documented more thoroughly so they can continue to be applied consistently should the current team within Irish Aid be redeployed to other posts.

Criteria: The ERFS Guidelines stipulate which organisations are eligible to apply for funding and thus avoids time and effort being wasted by agencies outside this pool. There is scope for this pool to be increased in

³⁰ As discussed in section 2.4 above, of the 34 countries where ERFS funding was allocated over the past four years 2015-2018 inclusive, 23 of these countries were from categories 1 and 2 as per Irish Aid's Country Categorisation Matrix

³¹ GHD Principles: <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html>

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

size, however, this would need to be married with an increased budget for the scheme plus resources to manage it within Irish Aid. ERFS is a flexible fund and does not restrict a response geographically so long as the objectives of ERFS are satisfied. The funding criteria are also clear and in keeping with the natures and core essence of the fund. The ineligible expenditure would benefit from an examination as noted in *section 2.5* above.

Proportionate: The size of the ERFS Application is proportionate with the size of the grant awarded which is appreciated by all NGO Partners, i.e. a 2-page application and ten-page final report is reasonable. The information requested by Irish Aid is also acceptable as is the time allowed to prepare and submit it. There is no evidence of unrealistic demands for information being placed on NGO Partners. A recommendation is put forward following this Review that a weighting model is applied to ERFS similar to the RAM with HPP.

Consultation & Communication: Communications between the Humanitarian Unit and the NGO Partners is constructive and effective. Most NGO Partners noted that they feel their respective Desk Officer in Irish Aid is approachable. As discussed in *section 2.3 and 23* above, Irish Aid is very responsive and decisive when dealing with ERFS Applications. Communications are at times less than satisfactory when dealing with ERFS reports and closing files. Evidence suggests that NGO Partners have to wait considerable lengths of time in order to get a response, sometimes up to one year or longer. While all Partners noted examples of this, it is not every case. This Review also recommends that joint learning and review meetings should be held at least annually, or whenever three or more of the partners allocate ERFS to the same emergency response.

Resources: Given the amount of work involved in Irish Aid's new grant management system, it appears that the amount of work involved and the number of staff available to do it (20 people are currently employed in Irish Aid's Humanitarian Unit) is not compatible. While the number of ERFS Grants approved on an annual basis is not excessive (averaging 27 a year), when coupled with all the other grant management responsibilities, it results in slow response times to NGO Partners on the feedback of final reports.

Timeframe: The timeframe for programming of ERFS Grants (3 months) is adequate and in line with other rapid response funding mechanisms. Some applications assessed apply for and are granted a four-month timeframe and there was one example from the 12 assessed of 2 months. A recommendation would be to grant NGO Partners a 6-month project cycle to include implementation and final reporting. While this level of flexibility already exists in theory, in practice it will remove the need for some NCE requests.

Flexibility: ERFS is undoubtedly a flexible funding mechanism. The number of eligible agencies is reasonably small however all are trusted NGO Partners of Irish Aid and therefore afforded a certain degree of flexibility. This was appreciated by NGO Partners who are united in their view that if the fund should change moving forward, the flexibility and rapid response nature of it should not be jeopardised. The fund is also flexible in its approach to localised responses and cash-based activities in keeping with Grand Bargain commitments.

Payments: Irish Aid replenishes the ERFS allocation to its NGO Partners on an annual basis, i.e. at the beginning of the year and in advance of need. It is one of the few rapid response funding schemes that prepositions humanitarian funding with its NGO Partners.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Having conducted a thorough review of ERFS, the Consultant's opinion is that it is one of the most effective and flexible rapid response funding mechanisms available to Irish Aid's NGO Partners who respond to humanitarian disasters. Notwithstanding this, a number of recommendations have been put forward as a result of this Review for consideration and possible action by Irish Aid. The main ones discussed in this report are summarised below:

1. ERFS being Added to Multi-donor Pooled Funded Responses

Consideration should be given to dissuading, or restricting, NGO Partners from adding their ERFS allocation to multi-donor pooled responses where it is evident they have limited or no control over how these funds are used. This is especially true when the humanitarian programme is designed around several large grants, some of which are not confirmed when the decision to include ERFS is made. This can lead to the delayed implementation of the ERFS component of the programme and situation where the country-based team priorities larger grants at the expense of smaller ones. This is not what the ERFS is designed for nor where it can offer much added value.

2. Resource Allocation

Given the albeit isolated incidents where ERFS Guidelines are substantially deviated from, consideration should be given to the introduction of a performance scoring mechanism, similar to the Resource Allocation Model applied under Irish Aid's Humanitarian Programme Plan. This need not be a complex system – a scoring model for each ERFS Grant can be devised and at the end of the year, this can be reviewed to determine how the ERFS allocation should be divided among the participating agencies. As noted by the Director of the Humanitarian Unit, and echoed by most of the NGO Partners, poor performers create a risk for the whole fund which needs to be addressed.

3. Learning and Review Procedures

Holding 360-style learning and review consultations following significant responses which involve three or more NGO Partners (who accessed their ERFS allocation as part of the response) should be considered. These should be held at least annually and would be a valuable learning opportunity for both Irish Aid and its NGO Partners on the management and use of ERFS.

4. Increasing the Size and Scope of the ERFS

The Dóchas HAWG submission (October 2017) to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence recommended the following: *'The speed of approval is key to the value of ERFS and the timeliness of the approval process should be evaluated. Given the usefulness of this funding instrument, access to the fund should be made available to a larger number of NGOs, and the amount of funding allocated to ERFS should be doubled'*. This sentiment was echoed during all face-to-face meetings with the NGO Partners who supported a significant increase in the size of the ERFS fund. Similarly, the new Irish official development policy *A Better World* commits to *'increase our funding and build our capacity for rapid response to sudden onset crises'*. Based on the considerable impact ERFS has had to date and given Ireland's commitment to increasing the aid budget and accelerating its 0.7% target of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030, this would represent a comparatively small investment for a significant return.

5. Broadening ERFS to Encompass Preparedness and or Early Response Actions

Consideration should be given to enable NGO Partners to use their ERFS allocation to carry out advanced preparedness and or early response actions, similar to the Start Fund's Anticipation Window. This would enable NGO Partners to begin responding before a crisis turns into a disaster.

6. Amendment to Ineligible Expenditure for ERFS Applications

Ineligibility criteria should be reviewed by the Humanitarian Unit and consider allowing reasonable and justifiable international travel for inclusion to ERFS Applications. This should also be applied consistently to all NGO Partners. Clarity should be provided on some of the ineligible expenditures from the Guidelines, i.e. visibility costs when branding is of benefit to Irish Aid or insurance costs.

7. Staff Retention

There is a disconnect between the volume of work required by the Humanitarian Unit and the number of staff employed to execute it. The high staff turnover in the Unit, plus the increasing demands for accountability on the small team of 20, necessitate an increase in staff numbers plus a review of retention across the Department.

8. Documenting Internal Procedures

The Standard Operating Procedures for the management and oversight of ERFS should be further developed to fully capture all internal procedures and decision-making processes. This should also include how the Humanitarian Unit engages with the Missions/Embassies in seeking their support with ERFS Applications. There is clear evidence of collaboration and good working practices between the Humanitarian and Civil Society and Development Education Units in Irish Aid. Whilst welcomed, procedures on how these Units engage should be documented, perhaps by the current Directors and Deputy Directors who currently manage it effectively.

9. Communications and Feedback on ERFS Reports

For the most part, communications between the Humanitarian Unit and the NGO Partners is constructive and effective. Most NGO Partners noted that they feel their respective Desk Officer in Irish Aid is approachable however expressed concerns about the impact on their relationship with Irish Aid when their Desk Officer is replaced. This Review also highlights the swift response to ERFS Applications by the Humanitarian Unit culminating in a quick approval decision for the NGO Partner. Communications are at times less than satisfactory when dealing with ERFS reports and providing feedback. Developing procedures resulting in the more timely and efficient appraisal of ERFS Reports for NGO Partners is recommended.

10. Monitoring and Evaluating of ERFS Applications

Unless exceptional circumstances, monitoring or evaluating an ERFS Grant in-country by the Humanitarian Unit is unlikely to make economic or practical sense. However, when selecting countries to be included as part of the joint PG/HPP monitoring visits, consideration should be given to those country programmes that have also had ERFS Grants. It is acknowledged that this will not always be feasible, however it should be added as a component of the selection criteria when choosing an NGO Partner's programme country for assessment. Consideration should also be given to periodically assessing Partner's capacity to effectively implement sudden onset disaster programmes which are relevant to ERFS Grants. This could be done as part of the PG/HPP Application Process or added to the Terms of Reference for Partner monitoring visits.

Annex 1) Terms of Reference for External Review of Emergency Response Fund Scheme

Background

ERFS (previously known as EHAF) was established in 2007 to promote early action and reduce loss of life in a sudden humanitarian crisis. The scheme is particularly geared towards the initial weeks after the onset of an emergency and targets those in immediate need.

At the beginning of each year, Irish Aid pre-positions a defined amount of funding with long-standing partner NGOs. With approval from Irish Aid, NGOs can access these standby funds to respond quickly after an emergency occurs, or when a protracted humanitarian situation suddenly deteriorates. It allows time for a rapid assessment of need and speedy planning to ensure appropriate responses.

Over the last decade, Irish Aid's partners have carried out almost 200 humanitarian responses to emergencies in over 40 countries, through ERFS support. In 2018, seven partners are in receipt of ERFS funding: the six Humanitarian Programme Plan partners³² who collectively receive €2.7m and the International Rescue Committee which receives €275,000.

Partner feedback (including the 2017 Dóchas submission to the JFCAT) consistently cites ERFS as one of the highest quality forms of funding, despite its relatively small size financially. A 2010 review found that ERFS was relevant and effective and in line with Ireland's Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. However there has not been any external analysis of ERFS since then, whilst Ireland's humanitarian assistance has grown and the global context has changed significantly.

Purpose of the Assignment

The assignment will inform future resource allocation to and management of the ERFS scheme. Specific objectives are:

1. To assess whether ERFS has been effective in enabling more timely and more effective humanitarian responses;
2. To assess if ERFS is being used by partner NGOs in line with the ERFS Guidelines project selection criteria
3. To solicit feedback from ERFS partners on opportunities to improve the design and management of the scheme;
4. To compare ERFS with other rapid funding models to consider if there are good practices to learn from to improve the design and management of ERFS;
5. To assess whether the formats for proposal, decision making and reporting are adequate;
6. To assess possibilities for expansion of ERFS to other partners;
7. To consider if the ERFS optimally synergises with other Irish Aid humanitarian funding mechanisms.

Scope of Work

The assignment will be desk based with potential travel to Limerick and Dublin. It will include desk review of documents and key informant interviews. The analysis should be both qualitative and quantitative. A kick-start meeting will be held where the consultant should present a detailed work plan and methodology. The approach should be consultative, using the process as a learning opportunity for all involved.

³² Christian Aid Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam Ireland, Plan International Ireland, Trócaire and World Vision Ireland

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

The assignment should be completed in no more than 25 working days and would preferably be finalised by the end of 2018.

Output

The consultant will produce: a draft report to include findings, analyses and recommendations for submission to Irish Aid, in line with the ToRs. Irish Aid will provide feedback on this and a final report should be submitted subsequently.

Project Officer

The Deputy Director of the NGO team in the Humanitarian Unit, Irish Aid will have overall responsibility for the review. This officer will project manage the services provided by the external consultant.

Intending applicants should submit a proposal (2 pages maximum), setting out:

- Their understanding of the TORs;
- A short methodology showing how they plan to approach the assignment
- A brief statement on how their skills match the services required.

A current CV should also be attached to the proposal.

Competencies Required

- Strong multi-disciplinary humanitarian background, with proven experience in international humanitarian work at both field and headquarter level.
- Considerable knowledge and extensive experience of humanitarian grant management and finance
- Knowledgeable and committed to best practice quality standards in humanitarian assistance.

Selection criteria

For a tenderer's submission to be considered, it is mandatory that candidates have significant relevant expertise or knowledge in the following areas:

- Humanitarian financing and grant-making
- Emergency response programmes, particularly in developing countries
- Report writing

Failure in more than one of these critical requirements will lead to elimination from the competition in advance of further evaluation. Please note that selection as a consultant does not guarantee employment.

Award criteria

The consultant will be awarded the contract according to the following criteria:

(i) Quality of submission (60 points)

- Evidence that the tenderer has the relevant experience in humanitarian grant management and finance to complete the review to a high quality (30)
- Evidence that the tenderer has the specific skills and technical skills in humanitarian grant management and finance as demonstrated in the proposed methodology (30)

(ii) Overall cost of the proposal. (40 points)

Cost will be based on the submitted fixed daily rate exclusive of VAT (please see Annex – Financial Submission Template).

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

FOI

It should be noted that any correspondence with Irish Aid in relation to the review is subject to the application of Freedom of Information legislation. This applies to the services under the contract and not the tendering and contracting process.

Tender Submissions

Tenders must be submitted via the online tender post-box on www.etenders.gov.ie and must be in Microsoft Office/PDF readable format. The closing date and time for this tender 17:00 on 21st November 2018, and late tenders will not be accepted. Tenderers should note that there is a maximum limit of 10MB per document when uploading proposals to www.etenders.gov.ie and must ensure to leave adequate time for submitting tenders. Tenders will not be accepted by fax or e-mail.

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

Annex 2) Summary of ERFS Allocations to Current NGO Partners, 2015-2018³³

Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) Allocations – 2015 to 2018							
COUNTRY	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	Oxfam	Plan I'ntl Ireland	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	TOTALS
Afghanistan	0	75,000	0	0	0	0	75,000
Bangladesh	400,000	210,093	0	100,000	0	0	710,093
Burundi	0	0	225,000	75,000	262,280	0	562,280
Chad	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
CAR	99,918	0	144,198	0	0	0	244,116
DRC	200,000	98,472	225,000	0	385,000	140,000	1,048,472
Ethiopia	460,312	0	100,000	100,000	200,000	0	860,312
Guatemala	0	0	0	75,000	0	0	75,000
Haiti	128,712	0	0	60,055	0	0	188,767
Honduras	0	0	0	0	150,000	0	150,000
India	0	175,000	0	0	0	0	175,000
Iraq	0	0	0	0	136,000	0	136,000
Indonesia	0	0	0	150,000	0	105,000	255,000
Kenya	0	75,000	0	0	200,000	0	275,000
Korea	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Malawi	0	100,000	0	100,000	65,720	0	265,720
Mozambique	185,401	0	0	0	0	0	185,401
Myanmar	0	100,000	0	50,000	122,000	0	272,000
Nepal	250,000	75,000	100,000	225,000	100,000	79,500	829,500
Niger	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	15,000
Nigeria	0	0	0	174,945	0	0	174,945
Pakistan	0	125,000	0	0	100,000	0	225,000
Philippines	0	176528	0	0	0	0	176,528
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	180,000	180,000
Sierra Leone	100,000	0	0	0	115,000	0	215,000
Somalia	85,000	0	125,000	0	358,000	388,000	956,000
Somaliland	0	0	0	0	0	115,500	115,500
South Sudan	0	296,064	75,000	100,000	100,000	130,000	701,064
Sudan	100,000	0	125,000	0	0	130,000	355,000
Syria	100,000	0	0	0	0	115,000	215,000
Uganda	75,657	0	0	100,000	0	117,000	292,657
Yemen	15,000	0	275,000	50,000	0	0	340,000
Zimbabwe	0	0	125,000	125,000	106,000	0	356,000
TOTAL	2,400,000	1,506,157	1,519,198	1,500,000	2,400,000	1,500,000	10,825,355

³³ These are the ERFS allocations received by the current Irish-based NGO Partners during the four year period 2015-2018 inclusive.

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) Allocations - 2018							
COUNTRY	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	Oxfam	Plan I'ntl Ireland	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	TOTALS
Bangladesh	100,000						100,000
DRC	200,000 ³⁴	98,472	100,000		250,000 ³⁵	140,000	788,472
Ethiopia	100,000		100,000	100,000			300,000
Guatemala				75,000			75,000
Honduras					150,000		150,000
Indonesia				150,000 ³⁶		105,000	255,000
Kenya					100,000		100,000
Korea	100,000						100,000
Myanmar		100,000					100,000
Philippines		176,528					176,528
Somalia					100,000		100,000
Sudan						130,000	130,000
Syria	100,000						100,000
Yemen			175,000	50,000			225,000
TOTAL	600,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	600,000	375,000	2,700,000

Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) Allocations - 2017							
COUNTRY	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	Oxfam	Plan I'ntl Ireland	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	TOTALS
CAR			144,198				144,198
DRC			125,000		135,000		260,000
Ethiopia	100,000				100,000		200,000
Kenya					100,000		100,000
Somalia			125,000		150,000	130,000	405,000
South Sudan		96,064		100,000		130,000	326,064
Syria						115,000	115,000
Bangladesh	200,000 ³⁷	110,093		100,000			410,093
Sierra Leone	100,000				115,000		215,000
Nepal	100,000			75,000			175,000
Chad	100,000						100,000
India		100,000					100,000
Kenya		75,000					75,000
Uganda				100,000			100,000
TOTAL	600,000	381,157	394,198	375,000	600,000	375,000	2,725,355

³⁴ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €100,000 each

³⁵ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €150,000 and €100,000

³⁶ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €76,272 and €73,728

³⁷ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €100,000 each

Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) Allocations - 2016

COUNTRY	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	Oxfam	Plan I'ntl Ireland	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	TOTALS
Bangladesh	100,000	100,000					200,000
Burundi			125,000		150,000		275,000
Ethiopia	100,000						100,000
Haiti	128,712			60,055			188,767
India		75,000					75,000
Iraq					136,000		136,000
Malawi		100,000					100,000
Mozambique	95,631						95,631
Niger				15,000			15,000
Nigeria				174,945			174,945
Somalia					108,000	258,000 ³⁸	366,000
South Sudan		100,000			100,000		200,000
Sudan	100,000		125,000				225,000
Uganda	75,657					117,000	192,657
Zimbabwe			125,000	125,000	106,000		356,000
TOTAL	600,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	600,000	375,000	2,700,000

Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) Allocations - 2015

COUNTRY	Concern	Christian Aid Ireland	Oxfam	Plan I'ntl Ireland	Trócaire	World Vision Ireland	TOTALS
Afghanistan		75,000					75,000
Burundi			100,000 ³⁹	75,000	112,280 ⁴⁰		287,280
CAR	99,918						99,918
Ethiopia	160,312 ⁴¹				100,000		260,312
Malawi				100,000	65,720		165,720
Mozambique	89,770						89,770
Myanmar				50,000	122,000 ⁴²		172,000
Nepal	150,000	75,000	100,000	150,000	100,000	79,500	654,500
Pakistan		125,000			100,000		225,000
Serbia						180,000	180,000
Somalia	85,000						85,000
Somaliland						115,500	115,500
South Sudan		100,000	75,000				175,000
Yemen	15,000		100,000				115,000
TOTAL	600,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	600,000	375,000	2,700,000

³⁸ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €130,000 and €128,000

³⁹ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €50,000 each

⁴⁰ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €65,190 and €47,090

⁴¹ This figure is made up of two separate applications of €100,000 and €60,312

⁴² This figure is made up of two separate applications of €19,838 and €102,162

Annex 3) Summary analysis of twelve NGO Partner ERFs Applications

Organisation	Country of Implementation	Project period	Project Title	Main Activities	Spend (€)	Target no of beneficiaries	Actual no of beneficiaries reached	Cost per beneficiary	% of direct expenditure
Christian Aid Ireland	South Sudan	13.03.17-12.06.17 (3 months)	Safe Drinking Water and Improved Sanitation and Hygiene Practices for Vulnerable IDPs and Host Communities in Unity, South Sudan	Provision of safe water and hygiene promotion	€96,034	14,000	14,000	€7.14	90.9%
Christian Aid Ireland	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	23.02.18 – 23.05.18 (3 months)	Meeting immediate needs of conflict affected households in Kasai Province	Household and hygiene NFI dist.	€98,471	4,500	4,145	23.76	82.4%
Concern Worldwide	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	01.03.18 – 30.05.18 (3 months)	Emergency Assistance to Conflict Affected Populations in Lomami Province, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).	Cash transfer programme	100,000	7,000	7,016	€14.25	85.9%
Concern Worldwide	Bangladesh	09.06.17-08.08.17 (3 months)	Emergency Response to Cyclone Mora Affected Communities in Kutubdia, Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh	Multi-purpose unconditional cash grants	100,000	8,250	8,759	€11.41	87.5%
Oxfam Ireland	Central African Republic	08.06.17 – 31.12.17 (7 months including 4 month ext.)	Emergency WASH Programme for IDPS in Bria	Emergency water, sanitation and hygiene promotion	350,000 (of which ERFs is 144,197)	38,439	32,041	€10.92	79.6%
Oxfam Ireland	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	20.06.17 – 19.09.17 (3 months)	Oxfam Emergency Water Supply Response in Kasai Province, Tshikapa Territory	Emergency water, sanitation and hygiene promotion	€1.8m (of which ERFs is 125,000)	60,000	12,755	€9.80	94.3%

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

Plan Int'l Ireland	Zambia	15/03/18 - 15/07/18 (4 months)	Immediate and Lifesaving Integrated EiE and CPiE Response in Mantapala Refugee Camp for Girls and Boys Fleeing from the DRC Crisis	Emergency education and child protection	€82,948	1,192	2,341	€35.43	84.6%
Plan Int'l Ireland	Uganda	30.04.17 – 31.07.17 (3 months)	Provide life-saving Child Protection (CP) services to South Sudanese refugees and host community children and their families	Emergency child protection	300,000 (of which ERFS is €100))	8,700	8,593	€34.91	89.3%
Trócaire	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	01.03.17 - 30.06.17 (4 months)	Emergency assistance to Sudanese refugees from Biringi in the territory of Aru.	Food & Seed dist.	135,000	6,000	6,228	€21.67	88.4%
Trócaire	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	10.03.18 – 09.06.18 (3 months)	Emergency Foods Security and Livelihoods for Internal Displaced People (IDPs) affected by crisis in Djugu territory, Democratic Republic of Congo	Food Distribution	193,619 (of which ERFS is €100))	4,800 (800HHs)	4,800 (800HHs)	€40.33	100% of ERFS grant allocated to direct project activities
World Vision Ireland	Somalia	01.04.17 - 31.05.17 (2 months)	Improved AWD and Cholera emergency response in South Central Somalia	Emergency supplies incl. medicines to CTCs	130,000	14,629	2,859	€45.47	87.4%
World Vision Ireland	Syria	24.10.17- 23.02.18 (4 months)	Emergency NFI/Winterization Response in Idlib, Syria	NFI / Winterization distribution	111,795	11,400	11,248	€9.94	89.7%

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

Annex 4) Schedule of meetings/interviews conducted

Name	Position	Date	Organisation	Purpose of Meeting
Matthew Cogan Claire Coughlan Seamus O’Callaghan Michael Shanahan	Deputy Director, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT Desk Officer, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT Desk Officer, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT Desk Officer, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT	24 January 2018	Irish Aid, DFAT Irish Aid, DFAT Irish Aid, DFAT Irish Aid, DFAT	Inception Meeting to present and agree methodology <i>Location:</i> Irish Aid Offices, Riverstone House, Limerick Discussion on merits and opportunities of the ERFS Synergies with other funding mechanisms Two additional phone calls were also scheduled
Patrick Haughey	Director, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT	5 February 2019	Irish Aid, DFAT	Discussion on merits and opportunities of the ERFS and synergies with other funding mechanisms <i>Location:</i> DFAT Offices, Hatch Street, Dublin 2
Lisa Doherty	Chargé d’Affaires a.i.	30 January 2019	Embassy of Ireland, Kenya	Phone call to discuss the merits of the ERFS, engagement between the Irish Embassy in Kenya and the Humanitarian Unit plus possibilities for potential improvement to the fund
Adrian Fitzgerald	Deputy Head of Cooperation	31 January 2019	Embassy of Ireland, Tanzania	Phone call to discuss the merits of the ERFS, engagement between the Irish Embassy in Tanzania and the Humanitarian Unit, plus possibilities for potential improvement to the fund
Amy Walters Keaney-Bray Fergus Thomas	Senior Programme Manager, Humanitarian Response Group Programme Manager, Humanitarian Response Group	1 February 2019	DFID DFID	Phone call to discuss DFID’s Rapid Response Fund and its comparison to the ERFS. The purpose was to assess the merits of the RRF and potential opportunities for improvements to the ERFS
Lars Faber	Senior Programme Officer, Dept. Stability & Humanitarian Aid	1 February 2019	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Phone call to discuss Dutch Relief Alliance and its comparison to the ERFS. The purpose was to assess the merits of the DRA and potential opportunities for improvements to the ERFS
Gustav Lindskog	Programme Manager, Unit for Humanitarian Assistance	12 March 2019	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)	Phone call to discuss the Rapid Response Mechanism and its comparison to the ERFS. The purpose was to assess the merits of the RRM and potential opportunities for improvements to the ERFS
Jeef Bech	Professional Manager	19 Feb 2019	CISU - Civil Society in Development	Phone call to discuss the Danish Emergency Relief Fund and its comparison to the ERFS. The purpose was to

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

				assess the merits of the DERF and potential opportunities for improvements to the ERFS
John O’Grady Elizabeth Keogh	Deputy Director / Assistant Principal, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT Third Secretary, Humanitarian Unit, DFAT	31 January 2019	Irish Aid, DFAT Irish Aid, DFAT	Phone call to discuss the synergies between the Rapid Response Initiative and the ERFS and possibilities for potential improvement to the fund
Edel Cribbin	Deputy Director, Civil Society and Development Education Unit, DFAT	18 Feb 2019	Irish Aid, DFAT	Phone call to discuss the synergies between Irish Aid’s Civil Society and the ERFS, plus possibilities for potential improvement to the fund
Anne-Marie McCarthy	Emergency Programmes Manager	30 January 2019	Plan International Ireland	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how Plan International Ireland complied with the ERFS guidelines
Dominic Crowley Chiara Nava	Emergency Director Humanitarian Adviser	30 January 2019	Concern Worldwide	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how Concern Worldwide complied with the ERFS guidelines
Noreen Gumbo Orla Duke	Head of Humanitarian Programmes Humanitarian Partnerships Advisor	6 February 2019	Trócaire	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how Trócaire complied with the ERFS guidelines
Colm Byrne	Humanitarian Manager	5 February 2019	Oxfam Ireland	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how Oxfam Ireland complied with the ERFS guidelines
Sarah O’Boyle Niall O’Rourke David Williams	Head of Programme Development Humanitarian Operations and Performance Manager Humanitarian Programme Advisor	5 February 2019	Christian Aid Ireland	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how Christian Aid Ireland complied with the ERFS guidelines
Maurice Sadlier Sheila Garry Andrea Finnegan	Programme’s Director Programme’s Advisor Programme Officer for Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs	6 February 2019	World Vision Ireland	Meeting to discuss the merits, challenges and opportunities of the ERFS. Also involved a review of two ERFS submissions to Irish Aid and how World Vision Ireland complied with the ERFS guidelines

Annex 5) Detailed methodology followed throughout this review

Below please find the detailed methodology which was followed during this review. All seven objectives of this review (as set out in the Terms of Reference) were completed within 25 working days.

Objective	Methodology
<p>Objective 1: To assess whether ERFS has been effective in enabling more timely and more effective humanitarian responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed of all relevant ERFS guidance and programme documents and assessed them in comparison to DAC criteria (<i>see note 1 below</i>) • Assessment was also made against all 24 Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and best practice grant management guidelines • This objective was also met by seeking the opinions of all key stakeholders and presenting findings in an evidence-based manner • All NGO partners were requested to share any relevant evaluation reports; internal or external reviews; Real time reviews; Real time evaluations which they had commissions within the past three years that make reference to support from ERFS. Analysis on any findings were consolidated and presented
<p>Objective 2: To assess if ERFS is being used by partner NGOs in line with the ERFS Guidelines project selection criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two ERFS programme submissions, including all supporting documentation, from each of the six partners were critically examined and analysed against the ERFS guidelines. This considered the eligibility criteria (agency, country focus and funding) in addition to the proposal and reporting submissions • See notes in relation to this objective below
<p>Objective 3: To solicit feedback from ERFS partners on opportunities to improve the design and management of the scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings were held with each of the ERFS partners during the last week of January/first week of February to solicit feedback on how the design and management of the fund can be potentially improved • Key informant questions were prepared and sent to the partners in advance to enable more thorough responses (<i>see note 3 below</i>). Only existing ERFS partners were interviewed (past or potential new partners were outside the remit of this review) • Meetings were held with key informants from Irish Aid Civil Society and Development Education Unit, representatives from the Irish Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania plus the Rapid Response Initiative in the Humanitarian Unit • Evidence from the modalities of other rapid response funding models also informed this objective (<i>see objective 4 below</i>)
<p>Objective 4: To compare ERFS with other rapid funding models to consider if there are good practices to learn from to improve the design and management of ERFS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings were conducted with four other rapid response funding mechanisms and a comparative analysis was conducted. These mechanisms were: DFID's Rapid Response Fund (RRF); Dutch Relief Alliance; Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM); and the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF). This objective also included a desk review of the Start Fund (<i>see note 4 below for a summary of the key questions considered</i>)
<p>Objective 5: To assess whether the formats for proposal, decision making and reporting are adequate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desk review was conducted of all relevant ERFS documentation and whether the application form and reporting formats, plus decision making processes, are all fit for purpose. This was considered against the 24 GHD principles and grant management best practice • The ERFS processes were also considered against other rapid response funding structures (<i>see objective 4 above</i>) • As above, this objective was met through key informant interviews with all six ERFS implementing partners plus key representatives from Irish Aid Humanitarian Unit

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

<p>Objective 6: To assess possibilities for expansion of ERFS to other partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews were conducted with Irish Aid Humanitarian Unit and desk review completed on all relevant documentation • Examined findings and recommendations from the 2010 review of the ERFS • Also examined recommendations from the 2012/2013 (internal) review and followed up on recommendations • Provided recommendations in an evidence-based manner on the possibilities of expanding the ERFS fund.
<p>Objective 7: To consider if the ERFS optimally synergises with other Irish Aid humanitarian funding mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review conducted on other Irish Aid humanitarian funding mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP); Rapid Response Initiative (RRI); Stock utilisation; and Calls for Proposal(s). The synergies were assessed between these and the ERFS • Assessed the synergies between ERFS and other Irish Aid Civil Society funding mechanisms such as Civil Society Funding and PG II • Where relevant, recommendations were made to Irish Aid for consideration and action, where appropriate

Notes (not exhaustive) – Objective 1

Questions for ERFS Partners / other Stakeholders based on DAC Criteria:

- *Relevance:* How has ERFS funding enabled you to respond quickly to rapid needs assessments (as opposed to situations where this funding is not allocated/available)? How has access to ERFS funding enabled you to respond quickly to identified needs (as opposed to situations where this funding is not allocated/available)?
- *Effectiveness:* How effective was the ERFS funding mechanism in supporting the NGO partner develop a timely and well-planned / prepared response?
- *Appropriateness:* How appropriate was the projects goal, outcomes and outputs in relation to the identified needs? How appropriate was the activities selected in comparison to the situation and underlying causes? Was the intervention an appropriate use of ERFS funding?
- *Sustainability:* Has ERFS facilitated or enabled a longer-term larger programme and/or enabled access to more substantial humanitarian funding (from Irish Aid or other donors)?
- *Impact* [note – considering that this is rapid funding for sudden onset emergencies or spikes in protracted crises, this may not be relevant to the review]: Have any long-term changes been produced from the project? If yes, can these be reasonably associated with the intervention? Have any unintended and/or negative changes been produced?

Notes (not exhaustive) – Objective 2

With reference to the ERFS Application Guidelines:

1. Eligible Agencies – do I need to check/review the eligibility of each of the 7 ERFS Partners per the ERFS Guidelines?
2. Eligible Countries – I will check that all 12 sample projects are compatible with the guidelines? Do I need to review the Country Categorisation Process [I would suggest this is not necessary]?
3. Funding Criteria. Check all 12 Applications against the following criteria:

No	Criteria	Met Y/N	Comment
3.1	Three-month timescale		
3.2	Compelling and overwhelming need to save and protect lives		
3.3	ERFS is used as catalytic funding to jumpstart the most urgent humanitarian activities		

Emergency Response Funding Scheme (ERFS) Review – February 2018

3.4	Additional funding is mobilised to cover the full package of a humanitarian response		Note that this is 'wherever necessary'.
3.5	Priority Activities (as per ERFS Guidelines)		Needs Assessment in addition to other activities
3.6	Check if expenditure is all eligible		Can only assess final financial statement for gross error. This is not a financial audit or in any way thorough

4. Application Procedures. Check if all 12 Applications followed the three-step application procedures consistently and correctly. Were any deviations justified and was Irish Aid notified (in writing) in a clear and timely manner?

Notes (not exhaustive) – Objective 3

Sample questions for NGO Partners will include the following (to be shared with the partner in advance to enable them to prepare appropriately for the meeting):

- What in your opinion are the merits and advantages of the ERFS fund? From your perspective, how could it be further improved?
- What are the drawback / disadvantages of the scheme and how can they be rectified?
- From your experience of seeking ERFS funding, how efficient and timely are the decision-making processes of the fund? Are there opportunities for improvement and if yes, specifically how?
- Given that the objective of the ERFS is for life-saving interventions, do you consider the funding criteria to be reasonable? Any comments or areas for improvement? Please specify.
- Given the urgency of the situations which the ERFS is intended to help address, are the ERFS application procedures appropriate in promoting early action and response to identified needs?
- How do you rate the support and communications from the Desk Officer or Irish Aid in general? Are they accessible? Have you sought an NCE and if yes, how in your opinion was it managed by Irish Aid?
- Are the proposal and reporting formats appropriate and fit for purpose (application form, results framework, budget, flow of funds analysis)? Are the timing of submissions for each of these sufficient/appropriate for the context?
- Let the relevant partner know the two emergency response applications / ERFS submissions under review (objective 2 above) so they can be better prepared to respond to specific questions regarding these particular grants.

Notes (not exhaustive) – Objective 4

Questions to ask DFID's Rapid Response Fund (RRF); Dutch Relief Alliance; Sida's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM); plus others:

- Enquire about the size of the fund and number of NGO partners (to enable a comparison to the ERFS)
- Ask for a copy of each of their guidelines plus application templates, budget and reporting formats, results framework, etc. Draw comparison to ERFS and identify potential improvements
- What are the synergies to other funding models that they have (both humanitarian and development) and how do they ensure consistency?
- Have they undertaken evaluations/reviews in the past three years of their respective funds and can they share the lessons learnt and recommendations for improvement?
- What evidence do they have that their respective fund is effective in enabling more timely and effective humanitarian responses. Where relevant, how did they gather this evidence?

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