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Special Fund for Emergency
and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)
Annual report 2017

Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) Annual report 2017

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Executive summary

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

The Fund has three components:

(i) a working capital component to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis;

(ii) a revolving fund component to support FAO's involvement in needs assessment and programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency¹ preparedness and response activities; and

(iii) a programme component, which pools resources in support of a programme framework for large-scale emergencies or strategically complements ongoing programmes through the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window, as well as early actions triggered by corporate early warnings.

From its inception through 31 December 2017, SFERA received USD 220.4 million, of which:

- USD 102 million was allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. sudden onset disasters, the Sahel, Horn of Africa, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza and protracted crises)
- USD 45.1 million was disbursed under the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity window
- USD 24.0 million was used to set-up or reinforce country office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation
- USD 8.2 million was allocated to the Level 3 emergencies preparedness and response window
- USD 4.1 million was contributed to the early action window.

Since SFERA's inception, USD 354.8 million has been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 46.3 million was advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as at 31 December 2017 amounted to USD 2.4 million, while SFERA's cash balance as at 31 December 2017 was USD 34.5 million.

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

Background

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

This annual report provides a brief description of the major operations initiated with SFERA funds for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2017. The report contains financial data for this period, as well as for the 14 years since the Fund became operational.

SFERA set-up

SFERA has three components: (i) a working capital component to advance funds, once a resource partner's commitment is secured, toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis; (ii) a revolving fund component to support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ (FAO) involvement in needs assessment, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency³ preparedness and response activities; and (iii) a programme component to support work on specific large-scale emergency programmes, or strategically complement ongoing programmes through the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window, as well as early actions triggered by corporate early warnings.

Table 1. SFERA components and windows

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

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

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

² FC 102/14.

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

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

SFERA resources

Receipts – Since SFERA's inception in April 2004, the Fund has received a total of USD 220.4 million. Of this amount, USD 155.2 million was provided by the member countries listed in the following table, including USD 7.0 million provided by resource partners that transferred the balances of closed emergency projects to SFERA. During the 12 months that ended on 31 December 2017, deposits to SFERA amounted to USD 12.8 million.

Table 2. SFERA funding receipts

Contributors	Jan-Dec 2017 USD (000)	Since inception USD (000)
Belgium	3 415	45 882
Norway *	31	34 472
Sweden	2 210	25 869
United Kingdom	0	9 339
Canada	110	9 250
France	55	8 797
Switzerland	0	4 894
Netherlands	1	4 462
Finland *	6	3 745
Italy	0	1 456
Saudi Arabia	2	1 377
Germany	0	1 305
Ireland	0	1 155
Austria	0	1 125
Spain	0	520
China	0	500
South Africa	0	452
Greece	0	227
Australia	0	107
Jordan	0	60
Monaco	0	59
Kuwait	0	50
Czechia	0	36
Others (less than 5 000)	1	35
Lao People's Democratic Republic	0	14
New Zealand	0	13
Luxembourg	0	8
Chile	0	5
Total members	5 831	155 216
Others	6 990	65 233
Total received	12 821	220 449

As of 31 December 2017 – Source: compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger.

* Accounting reclassifications

Use of SFERA funds

Under the working capital component, USD 354.8 million was advanced to projects after resource partners' commitment, but before receiving the cash contributions. Of this amount, USD 2.4 million remains outstanding, pending receipt of resource partner funds.

Of the USD 220.4 million contributed, USD 32.2 million was approved under the revolving fund component (USD 4 million during the reporting period). A total of USD 151.2 million was allocated under the programme component, of which USD 6.9 million was provided during the reporting period. The use of the funds is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Funding components

	Jan-Dec 2017 (USD 000)	Since inception (USD 000)
Advances		
Working capital component		
Total advances made during the period	46 260	354 767
Refunds on advances paid during the period	46 403	352 326
Outstanding advances		2 441
Applications		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	1 500	12 750
Needs assessment and programme development missions	2 500	11 253
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response		8 247
Total revolving component	4 000	32 250
Programme component		
AIRC	5 766	45 104
Horn of Africa (regional programme)	-	13 521
The Sahel (regional programme)	-	2 642
Avian influenza campaign	-	45 928
Tsunami campaign	-	10 002
Initiative on soaring food crisis	-	1 168
Locust campaign	-	4 982
Protracted crises	0	3 648
Typhoon and hurricane	0	15 598
El Niño	0	4 552
Early action	1 138	4 138
Subtotal programme component	6 904	151 285
Grand total applications	10 904	183 535
SFERA balance		34 474



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Working capital component

Advances – During the reporting period, 87 percent of SFERA advances were in support of projects funded from five resource partners, as shown in Table 4. Once a resource partner's commitment is secured, funds are allocated towards the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis.

Table 4. SFERA advances from resource partners

Resource partner	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
United States of America	19 718	21 357
United Kingdom	8 076	7 600
European Union	5 200	5 430
World Bank	4 000	4 000
Germany	3 250	3 250
United Nations Development Programme	3 000	3 000
Sweden	700	700
United Nations Darfur Facility	700	0
Norway	317	317
Japan	500	0
France	300	300
Austria	300	0
World Food Programme	200	200
CARE	0	250
Total	46 260	46 403

Advances mainly supported major programmes in Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria representing over 93 percent of all advances between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017.

Table 5. SFERA advances for country programmes

Country	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
Somalia	35 830	35 830
South Sudan	4 000	3 500
Nigeria	3 402	3 402
Sudan	1 100	400
Burundi	476	0
Subregional office for Southern Africa	353	637
Uganda	300	0
Afghanistan	200	200
Global	200	0
Myanmar	200	200
Regional Africa	200	430
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0	250
Zimbabwe	0	1 555
Total	46 260	46 403

In drought-affected rural areas of Somalia, early warnings were loud and clear. With the goal of keeping the country famine-free, SFERA advances empowered at-risk households to better anticipate, prevent and recover quickly from pressures affecting agriculture-based livelihoods. Vulnerable households have increased their resilience to shocks and stresses (i.e. floods and armyworm) through restored production capacity and value addition, diversified income sources, temporary employment, plant and animal pest and disease control, and protection of natural resources. Thanks to SFERA

advances, agricultural production has been restored among households in – and returning to – drought-affected areas through the timely provision of agropastoral livelihood input packages covering water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, and non-food and other vital forms of support through its ongoing cash and community support work.

In South Sudan, through SFERA advances, the most vulnerable farming households and herders received timely livelihood support through the provision of a combination of crop, vegetable and fishing kits, livestock vaccinations and treatments, and nutrition vouchers that can be exchanged at local markets. This increased the availability of food through agricultural production and improved livestock health. FAO enhanced the coping capacities of the most vulnerable populations at risk of hunger and malnutrition, while ensuring evidence-based planning and coordinated field programming, through the implementation of food security information, analysis and coordination mechanisms.

SFERA advances enabled FAO to improve the agricultural production of internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and vulnerable host communities in northeast Nigeria's Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States through the timely distribution of drought-resistant quality rainfed seeds and fertilizers according to the local agro-climatic conditions. Vulnerable households' livestock assets were safeguarded through the restocking of small ruminants, distribution of fodder and vaccination and deworming campaigns. Training on best utilization of seeds, good agricultural and resilient practices, animal husbandry, health management and nutrition – specifically benefiting women – accompanied the distribution of inputs.



Revolving fund component

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

Table 6. Emergency coordination

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Afghanistan	132
Bangladesh	197
Burkina Faso	15
Cameroon	200
Central African Republic	95
Chad	132
Democratic Republic of the Congo	100
Ethiopia	68
Haiti	65
Iraq	320
Jordan	114
Kenya	307
Lesotho	60
Mali	70
Mauritania	20
Myanmar	130
Niger	38
Fiji	59
Pakistan	18
Senegal	25
Somalia	78
Turkey	186
Uganda	60
Ukraine	28
West Africa	25
Total allotment	2 540

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

Table 7. Needs assessment mission allocations

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Afghanistan	4
Bangladesh	36
Bolivia	5
Burundi	7
Cabo Verde	20
Cameroon	9
Central African Republic	100
Chad	15
Cuba	7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	87
Eastern Africa	25
Haiti	89
Iraq	109
Jordan	28
Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon	90
Kenya	9
Lebanon	20
Madagascar	14
Namibia	44
Niger	7
Nigeria	90
Nigeria and Chad	10
Pakistan	18
Peru	6
Senegal	7
Somalia	70
South Sudan	300
Sri Lanka	30
Sudan	80
Turkey	5
Uganda	100
West Bank and Gaza Strip	97
Yemen	20
Zimbabwe	30
Southern Africa	3
Total allotment	1 588

The **Level 3 emergency preparedness and response** window was established under the revolving fund component following the Finance Committee's endorsement at its Hundred and Forty-Seventh Session⁴. This window focus on the following six areas: (i) development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures; (ii) capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness; (iii) organizational preparedness; (iv) participation in Level 3 interagency processes; (v) Level 3 simulations; and (vi) Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

Preparedness

Under the “**Development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures**” area, extensive consultations were initiated to review the Director-General's Bulletin (DGB) 2013/32 and the accompanying Operational Guidelines for Level 3 emergency preparedness and response in order to integrate lessons learned from Level 3 emergency responses undertaken in 2013-16⁵. The FAO Emergency Response Preparedness Plan and accompanying guide have been prepared to equip FAO Representatives with the means to ensure a minimum level of office emergency response preparedness. In terms of integration of preparedness in corporate business processes, a section on emergency response preparedness has been included in the Country Annual Report, which provides useful information on the overall status of FAO representation levels of emergency preparedness. Based on this analysis, tailored support is provided to country offices in areas of emergency response preparedness.

The “**Capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness**” area supports the conception, design and advanced planning of regional-level capacity development events, which build core capacities of FAO country offices for emergency response. This window also supported a post-disaster needs assessment and data information management training for disaster risk reduction focal points and emergency coordinators working in various FAO country offices in Asia and the Pacific as a mean of supporting emergency response capacities.

Under the “**Organizational preparedness window**”, the quarterly Global Early Warning/Early Action System (EWEA) report on food security and agriculture was continuously to be produced and improved throughout 2017, with four editions issued during 2017. Acting on the commitments made in 2016, FAO, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), finalized El Niño and La Niña standard operating procedures for early action, marking a significant milestone in interagency work on early action. An FAO EWEA Country Toolkit was designed to form the key guidance document on implementing EWEA systems in the future. Regional advocacy efforts were supported through the participation in the Regional Dialogue Platform in Viet Nam. Under the Emergency Response Roster (ERR) workstream, training was carried out in three regional offices to support regional level capacity on ERR functionalities.

Under the “**Participation in Level 3 interagency processes**” area, funding enabled FAO to participate in all relevant interagency processes, as well as fulfil its responsibilities as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and co-lead agency of the Food Security Cluster. At interagency level, FAO contributed to the IASC EWEA analytical process and report. FAO also contributed to the revision of the Emergency Response Preparedness approach led by OCHA and facilitated interagency contingency planning exercises at country level. FAO is also engaged in global preparedness initiatives, such as the Global Preparedness Partnership (GPP). In December 2017, a meeting of core partner directors (FAO, OCHA, United Nations Development Programme, World Food Programme and

⁴ FC147/8

⁵ Since its publication on 7 May 2013, Director-General's Bulletin has guided Level 3 declarations in response to natural and human-induced disasters and crises in the Philippines (November 2013), the Central African Republic (December 2013), South Sudan (February 2014) and Yemen (July 2015). In addition, there have been a number of countries for which an increased corporate surge support has been put in place (Ethiopia, Northeast Nigeria and Southern Africa) or those which have been in need of some form of a sustained support (Haiti, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic).

World Bank Global Facility for disaster reduction and recovery) was hosted by FAO to increase ‘corporate’ awareness among core partners and to develop resource mobilization planning.

Under the "**Level 3 Simulations**" area, design sessions were held for the development of a range of humanitarian simulation exercises in order to define parameters and requirements for different target audiences. FAO was also involved in designing and facilitating interagency simulations (e.g. West Bank and Gaza Strip, Uzbekistan and Georgia).

Response

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

Table 8. Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response allotments

Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response	Allotment USD (000)
Democratic Republic of the Congo	500
Total	500

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, SFERA Level 3 allocation was instrumental in rapidly and substantially scaling up the capacity of the country office to respond to the emergency in the Kasai region, Tanganyika and South Kivu provinces and the time-critical needs of the approaching agricultural campaign. Following the declaration of the increased FAO Corporate Surge Support until December 2017, several missions were deployed to field offices to provide support and procure essential expendable items such as vaccines to respond to the crisis in order to reduce the risks of further deterioration in food security.



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Programme component

Under the SFERA programme component, USD 5.8 million was allocated under the AIRC window and USD 2.3 million under the early action window during the reporting period:

AIRC window

Under the AIRC window, USD 5.8 million were received from Belgium, Sweden and the Holy See. The funds were allocated to 14 countries to support time-critical, emergency agricultural assistance while developing a more programmatic response to crises.

Table 9. Funding provided under the AIRC window

Country	Type of intervention	Amount USD (000)
Myanmar	Emergency assistance for the recovery of livelihoods of flood-affected people in Chin state	100
Nigeria	Restoring agricultural livelihoods of internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and vulnerable host families in Northeast Nigeria	500
Kenya	Protecting livestock assets and safeguarding livelihoods in crossborder areas of the Mandera Cluster	400
Cameroon	Emergency assistance for the protection of pastoral livelihoods' activities affected by Boko Haram	300
Chad	Response to the humanitarian needs of pastoralists following the Boko Haram insurgency	300
Philippines	Emergency assistance in restoring food security and agricultural production in conflict-affected communities in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	500
Ethiopia	Protecting the pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods of communities in drought-affected regions of Ethiopia through innovative feed interventions	500
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Emergency response to support 5 000 of the most vulnerable households (IDPs, returnees and host communities) in the Kasai Central, Kasai and Kasai Oriental provinces through agricultural inputs	500
Kenya	Protecting livestock assets and safeguarding livelihoods in Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera and Wajir	500
Cuba	Emergency support to rehabilitate food security and livelihoods of people affected by Hurricane Irma	300
Dominica	Emergency support to restore the fishery sector and protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable fisherfolk affected by Hurricane Maria	100
Bangladesh	Emergency support for small-scale livestock farmers in flood-affected communities in Bangladesh	300
Yemen	Integrated food security and nutrition sensitive response to the most vulnerable households in Dhamar Governorate	479
Ethiopia	Reinforcing resilience of livestock-based livelihoods and nutrition in three <i>woredas</i> in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region in Ethiopia	479
Syrian Arab Republic	Support to resilience, food security and socio-economic inclusion of IDPs and vulnerable host communities in the Syrian Arab Republic	479
South Sudan	Rapid response and livelihood support for crisis-affected populations in South Sudan	30
Total		5 766

In 2017, Kenya has experienced one of the worst droughts in decades. The number of severely food insecure people more than doubled from 1.3 million to 2.7 million people, provoking the Government to recognize it as a national disaster. To protect the most vulnerable households located outside the limited irrigation schemes, SFERA AIRC contribution supported the livestock sector. Some 26 000 pastoralist households received the necessary inputs to increase milk production and support the survival and sustained production of breeding livestock. The support included the distribution of animal feed, the provision of water and water tanks, animal health services as well as support through destocking and slaughter destocking for commercial value.

In Cameroon, agricultural activities continue to be severely affected, particularly in the Far North region, by recurrent climate shocks and civil unrest that has spread from neighbouring Nigeria. In the Far North region, livestock rearing activities were also affected by the crisis, with large numbers of cattle reported to have been stolen. Thanks to SFERA AIRC contributions, destocking and restocking activities supported the livelihoods of 1 200 people and the production of 11 tonnes of dried meat provided nutritious food to 550 food insecure households.

The main factors contributing to deteriorating food security in Chad are the ongoing civil unrest due to the Boko Haram insurgency and related population movements, poor terms of trade for pastoralists, ongoing agricultural lean season, exacerbated by chronic poverty, low economic development and climate variability. SFERA AIRC fund supported the livestock sector and the livelihoods of 5 220 pastoralists through destocking activities for 750 herder households (belonging to IDPs and host communities) and providing dried meat rich in protein to 870 food insecure families with children under five.

Armed clashes between government forces of the Philippines and members of the Maute Group – a local non-state armed group – erupted in Marawi City, on the island of Mindanao in May 2017. Agriculture production, one of the primary sources of food and livelihood of affected residents, has come to a halt as people fled their homes and abandoned their farmlands to avoid getting caught in the crossfire. The livelihoods of at least 15 000 people, mostly dependent on rice and corn, were at stake and the clashes led to the displacement of 12 000 people. Through SFERA AIRC funds, about 13 500 people were equipped with seeds, fertilizer and farming tools in time for the cropping season and to facilitate the production of enough rice and corn to feed more than 58 000 people over the year.

The severe drought that impacted Ethiopian herding and agro-pastoral communities has prevented many of them from meeting their nutritional, food security and cash needs as well as other social obligations. Obtaining feed is a major problem for pastoralists, followed by water availability and the prevalence of opportunistic diseases due to weak livestock body conditions. To respond to a rapidly deteriorating situation, SFERA AIRC funds granted immediate support to 12 000 pastoral households in Borana and Oromiya regions through the provision of emergency supplementary feed and animal health services.

In Yemen, an estimated 17 million people (60 percent of the population) were reported to be food insecure in March 2017 and required urgent humanitarian assistance to save lives and protect livelihoods. While food is the single biggest monthly expenditure item across all households, horticulture production contributes to 30 to 50 percent of households' annual income and engages over 60 percent of women and girls. To improve households' dietary diversity, SFERA AIRC funds were used to distribute seeds – prioritizing households with children under five years of age or pregnant and lactating women – and trained 29 750 people on the production of highly nutritious vegetables.

Seven years into the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, fighting continues unabated across the country, causing human suffering and displacement at an intolerable scale. Since 2011, more than 11 million people inside the Syrian Arab Republic have been displaced. Agriculture has been

seriously affected by widespread damage to infrastructure and equipment, high prices and shortages of inputs and energy, and disruptions in markets. Yet, despite the challenges, the agriculture sector remains the backbone of livelihoods in rural areas and sustains food supply in the country. SFERA AIRC supported 18 000 people from vulnerable rural families and IDPs living in peri-urban and urban areas to grow their own nutritious food through distribution of vegetable seeds as well as through knowledge sharing and capacity building on homestead gardening and micro-gardening.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 7.7 million people are facing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity, representing 11 percent of the rural population. The most-affected communities are located in the Kasai provinces, where 25 000 people have received assistance to restore their livelihoods through SFERA AIRC funds, including small-scale livelihoods starter kits (seeds, tools and livestock). In addition, local communities' organizational capacities were reinforced through the creation of farmer field schools.

The ongoing crisis in South Sudan is aggravating a fragile socio-economic context, in which many households are at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition both in rural and urban areas. In support of the 2017 response campaign, SFERA AIRC funds were renewed to support 5 000 of the most vulnerable households (farmers, fishers and pastoralists) resume their livelihoods and strengthen their food security. The project contributed to the procurement and distribution of emergency livelihood crop kits, vegetable kits and fishing kits to enhance the livelihood-based productive sectors and increase the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

Category 5 Hurricane Irma was the strongest tropical cyclone observed in the Atlantic since Hurricane Wilma in 2005 in terms of maximum sustained winds. This extremely powerful and catastrophic hurricane caused severe damages and losses to agricultural and livestock production, including fishery. As food availability was the most pressing need, support was provided for the immediate rehabilitation of egg and vegetable production, considering its importance for the affected communities' nutrition. SFERA AIRC funds enabled the restoration of 5 units of poultry farms hosting 47 500 hens and two greenhouse tunnels capable of producing 1 million seedlings per year. This provided 118 750 people with sufficient protein (10 eggs monthly per person) and 36 667 people with nutritious vegetables (9 kg monthly per person).

Since August 2017, unprecedented flooding has ravaged Bangladesh, affecting over 8 million people across 32 districts, damaging 619 834 houses and killing 145 people. Critical damages and losses have also been reported in the livestock sector, particularly hay and fodder. In response, the SFERA AIRC-funded project supported over 30 000 affected people through the provision of emergency concentrate feed as well as dewormed and vaccinated over 4 000 livestock.

Category 5 Hurricane Maria caused catastrophic damages and losses to the agriculture sector including crop, livestock and fishery production when it hit Dominica in September 2017. Fisheries provide a significant source of income, employment and an important contributor to the population's food security. SFERA AIRC funds contributed to the rehabilitation of the fisheries sector through the provision of quality fishing gears, boat repair material and other equipment to 2 000 fishing-dependent people. The project enabled fishers to resume their livelihoods and avoid further deterioration of their food security and nutritional status.

Early action window

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

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

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

Table 10. Early action window funding

Country	Allotment USD (000)
Ethiopia	400
Somalia	400
Madagascar	400
Mongolia	290
Sudan	400
Total allotment	1 890

In January 2017, two allocations were released for Ethiopia and Somalia, complementing the funding released in December 2016 for Kenya. The risk was the early onset of the drought which has since impacted the Horn of Africa significantly. The early release of funds – a month earlier than the official declaration of the drought emergency by governments – enabled FAO to procure and distribute livestock fodder, mineral blocks and veterinary support earlier for core breeding herds of vulnerable pastoralist livelihoods in the southern Somali region of Ethiopia and in the Puntland and Somaliland regions of Somalia. This ensured the protection of animals which pastoralist livelihoods depended on through the peak drought season. A cost-effectiveness study was carried out in Kenya and Ethiopia after the end of the early action programme. This study found that there was a considerable cost-benefit ratio to the early action livestock investments (almost 3.5 for Kenya and 9.3 for Ethiopia). The study also found a considerable increase in milk production. The value of the extra milk produced covered nearly half of the overall project costs. Milk is fundamental for vulnerable pastoralist households for both income and food security. The improvement in animal body conditions was also significant and translated into an average economic gain of USD 223 per household, which was crucial for income.

In November 2017, USD 290 000 was allocated following indications of an impending *dzud* (harsh winter season) in Mongolia. *Dzud* is the major natural hazard risk in the country with a considerable impact on the livestock sector – a critical component for the economy (up to 30 percent of national gross domestic product). A two-tier plan was designed with the country office under which FAO first carried out a destocking exercise for 500 households and distributed the meat to vulnerable households with no livestock. A second phase, carried out in February 2018, delivered feed to protect the core breeding herds for the upcoming peak mortality season (March – April). FAO started implementing early actions in December 2017, a whole four months earlier than the regular response.

In November 2017, USD 400 000 was also allocated to Madagascar, who had implemented the EWEA approach back in December 2016. The EWEA system monitoring climate and food security indicated signals of a high vulnerability of households in the South, who were already in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 and facing an early lean season. The early action programme is designed to assist 8 000 households in critical areas (those that were projected to be in IPC Phase 4 by April) with short cycle crop varieties and irrigation kits to help them survive the lean season.

In December 2017, USD 400 000 were allocated to Sudan, where the EWEA system was piloted in March 2017. The EWEA indicators gave signals of an impending drought in Kassala already in September/October 2017 – months before alarms were raised elsewhere about the drought onset in Sudan. Shortly after the initial findings a rapid assessment mission was dispatched to ascertain the situation. The findings confirmed the EWEA information and a plan was put in place to provide supplementary animal feed to support 5 000 households for up to three months. Animal health interventions for 30 000 heads of cattle will compliment these actions, including vaccinations and deworming followed by refresher trainings for community animal health workers. An early destocking campaign will also be launched to help relieve pressure on natural resources and transportable tanks will be provided to each household to support water-management activities. Implementation is currently ongoing.

Conclusion

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

SFERA plays a critical role in strengthening country offices' operational capacities, as well as country offices' preparedness. The Fund enables the Organization to respond to Level 3 emergencies as well as rapidly scale-up response efforts in case of smaller scale emergencies. SFERA also plays a critical role in coordinating a collaborative, longer-term response focusing on livelihoods and resilience strategies, as well as improving the capacity of their local institutions to prevent, protect and restore.

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