

**FLASH APPEAL OVERHAUL**  
**Draft discussion paper**  
**19 February 2008**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2007 saw a sharp increase in the number of flash appeals compared to previous years, due in part to a greater frequency of weather-related disasters (which have climbed steadily in recent years), but also to the fact that more small-scale disasters generated flash appeals in 2007. A key related fact is that more disasters and flash appeals are happening in countries with low humanitarian capacity among the international organizations present. This paper reviews the flash appeal mechanism in light of other developments in humanitarian policy and response tools, including the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the cluster approach, the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) function, and current efforts to improve contingency planning, rapid needs assessment and surge capacity. The basic rationale of flash appeals – to organise the response and funding requests, and to stimulate funding supply – endures, but the design, practice, and image of flash appeals need an overhaul.

Potential improvements in the quality of flash appeals are clearly interlinked with the strengthening of other humanitarian response tools. This paper draws linkages to current efforts to enhance such tools, but does not propose remedies for the totality of IASC response mechanisms. Within these parameters, practical proposals are made for improving the quality and timeliness of flash appeals, and for adapting their design and practice to new political and operational realities.

In particular, greater clarity is needed on the timing of flash appeals, what should be included in them, the nature of the relationship to immediate CERF funding, and the need for systematic and dynamic reviews of flash appeals. There is room for discussion on these issues, but the OCHA view is that flash appeals should be what they claim to be: very rapid (e.g. within five to seven days of a sudden-onset disaster or from the declaration of an emergency, in ways yet to be determined); that initial CERF allocations should aim for the same timing, to kick-start the appeal and provide very rapid funding; that a flash appeal should be limited to the immediate needs and only include early recovery projects to the extent that there is need for them, and the ability to implement them is already clear and immediate; that a process of revision should be immediately started with a view to a formal update (rolling version) three or four weeks later; and that systematic and regular revision of flash appeals should be obligatory. Meanwhile, rapid needs assessment methodology needs to be simplified and standardised; and the relationship between system-wide appeals and individual agency / organisation appeals clarified.

Many of the key practical steps relate to the need for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to enhance humanitarian preparedness and response capacity in disaster-prone countries, in particular in countries with development-profile United Nations country teams. In so doing, the humanitarian community must adapt to the fact that developing countries have invested heavily in disaster preparedness and response capacity in recent years, particularly in Asia. The Red Cross estimates that 80% of disasters are managed at the national level.<sup>1</sup> This changes the nature of UN involvement in disaster response: the UN needs to engage systematically with disaster-prone countries prior to disasters, making full use of available early warning information, and address host governments' capacities as well as their sensitivities surrounding the activation of a flash appeal.

A second area of key steps is to ensure stronger alignment between disaster response (and resulting flash appeal content) and humanitarian reform, with focus on the cluster approach (or "adapt[ing] current working methods to conform to cluster approach guidance"<sup>2</sup>), the authoritative role of RC/HCs in prioritising among projects, NGO inclusion in flash appeals, and the balance between life-saving and early recovery projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, "International cooperation in humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development", 7 September 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Rome Statement on Cluster Roll-Out, paragraph 8, adopted at the IASC Working Group (WG) meeting of 5-7 November 2007.

Following the analysis after this executive summary is a list of immediate steps that OCHA and the IASC can take to address key weaknesses in flash appeal guidelines and practice. The paper also maps a broader set of measures that OCHA and the IASC need to explore regarding the flash appeal's long-term adaptation to emerging trends.

## **BACKGROUND ANALYSIS**

### **1. The climatic context**

Between 2000 and 2006, the annual average number of disasters doubled to more than 400, according to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. The rise in the total number of disasters may be attributed, in part, to improved reporting. Other factors include the effects of global warming, and increased concentrations of people in unsafe and hazard prone areas. The number of climate-related (or "hydro-meteorological hazard") events, such as floods, hurricanes and droughts, has increased dramatically over the last 20 years, both in absolute terms and in comparison with the number of geological disasters (such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis). From 1987 to 1998, the average annual number of climate-related disasters was 195. From 2000 to 2006, the average was 365, representing an increase of 87%. Comparable figures for the same period for geological disasters reflect a rise from 28 to 38, which represents an increase of 36%.<sup>3</sup>

Of the 15 flash appeals published in 2007, all but one (Peru earthquake) were climate-related (cyclones, floods and droughts).<sup>4</sup> In the future even more natural disasters may strike in unexpected places. For example, climate change has already had unexpected impact on floods, reducing their predictability. Disasters may strike at different locations simultaneously: for instance, floods can hit two or three countries the same day. In these situations, OCHA Regional Offices' available surge capacity is easily overstretched. This trend requires a review of existing response mechanisms for sudden-onset disasters, including flash appeals.

The quality of such appeals (situation analysis, needs assessment, overview of response capacity, and prioritisation among sectors and projects) remains pivotal for well-informed funding decisions by donors; joint planning of disaster response among agencies; and evidence-based provision of humanitarian relief to beneficiaries. If a greater number of disaster responses and appeals are to be managed effectively, longstanding systemic shortcomings and constraints must be addressed in the medium term. However, there are short-term measures that can be taken to remedy some of the commonest flaws in flash appeal practice.

A consequence of 2007's climatic patterns is that more disasters struck in countries with no longstanding humanitarian operation: for example OCHA does not have a presence in 11 out of the 15 countries for which flash appeals were issued in 2007, and in some of these countries other humanitarian agencies were not structured to conduct rapid assessments, planning or response. OCHA does not currently have sufficient regional surge capacity to fully remedy this situation.

### **2. Weaknesses in the flash appeal process**

#### **2.1 Delay**

2007 saw some significant delays in the issue of flash appeals (see table 2 below), moreover with no commensurate gain in quality or precision. Among 2007 flash appeals, the average span between disaster<sup>5</sup> and appeal was 35 days, with the slowest being Burkina Faso at 79 days, and the Dominican Republic the fastest at eight. Even the latter should be seen as slower than desired; and an average of a month between disaster and flash appeal is completely unacceptable. Comprehensive data have

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (GA), 7 September 2007: "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

<sup>4</sup> Bolivia (floods), Dominican Republic (tropical storm Noel), Nicaragua (hurricane Felix), Democratic People's Republic of Korea (floods), Lesotho (drought), Madagascar (floods), Mozambique (floods and cyclone), Pakistan (cyclone and floods), Peru (earthquake), Sudan (floods), Swaziland (drought), Uganda (floods), Ghana (floods), Zambia (floods).

<sup>5</sup> Measuring the date of disaster from the date of the first international report thereof.

not been gathered for the span between disaster and appeal in previous years, but note that the Tsunami Flash Appeal was issued after 11 days, and the Pakistan Earthquake Flash Appeal after only three days. Common causes for delay include: inexperience in humanitarian response on the part of the country team; light deployment of surge support from headquarters or regional offices (for example, often only one OCHA staff is deployed); a misperception that thorough assessments must precede even the initial edition of an appeal; and affected country governments' perceptions of the role of international organisations in the disaster response, in particular an aversion to being the subject of an appeal.

Why rush the initial flash appeal – why not wait a few weeks until there is better information, detailed assessments and elaborate planning? A fundamental reason for issuing an initial flash appeal quickly with available information, inference and elemental joint planning is that the humanitarian system, particularly donors, rely on flash appeals as proxies for estimating the scale, severity, nature and urgency of disasters. Several other reasons flow from this. If the implementing side of the humanitarian system with all its expertise cannot provide this overview within a few days, the credibility of and confidence in humanitarian response suffers. Flash appeals stimulate funding supply in that some donors can access emergency funding reserves only, or more easily and quickly, if a flash appeal has been launched. A rapid flash appeal pre-empts solo appeals that agencies might otherwise feel obliged to launch but which concern stakeholders who see solo appeals as a sign of systemic fragmentation. The strategic planning forum that the development of a flash appeal provides – even if the joint planning is elemental in the first days – can produce a more prioritised immediate response than disconnected actions in lieu of such joint planning.

For these reasons among others, despite the obstacles, country teams should be held to issuing flash appeals within five days of a disaster, to organise the response and mobilise resources fast, and capitalise on donor and media attention.

## **2.2 Failure to find the right balance between speed and precision in needs assessment**

Donors accept the principle of a trade-off between speed and precision in needs assessment and the resulting appeal.<sup>6</sup> To issue an appeal within five days, a country team that is not already on a humanitarian footing will probably not be able to conduct any thorough ground assessment. (Experience shows that assessment exercises which were initially intended to yield a result within 2-3 days usually end up taking 7-10 days.) The humanitarian system should therefore accept the principle and develop the practice of launching initial appeals with estimated needs and response largely based on remote sensing, secondary data, and reasonable inference. (Appeal funding requests should be commensurately conservative.) The initial appeal would be revised after better needs assessment, on a rolling basis, and with an updated document published a few weeks later.

Needs analysis methods also have to be refined. Flash appeals rarely distinguish between the levels and ways in which people are “affected” by a disaster, with for example the entire caseload often deemed to need food aid. The appeals rarely compare needs across sectors and are therefore inadequate to inform funding decisions. More nuanced categories of “affected”, including levels of displacement, loss of shelter, food, sanitation etc, are therefore needed.

More broadly, the humanitarian community presently lacks a mechanism to judge needs and make comparisons between crises, in the form of a template that brings together, for example, numbers affected; state of the affected population pre-disaster; coping mechanisms; extent of the damage; ease of access and state of infrastructure; and capacity of the government. Standardization of such basic metrics would both inform the decision on whether to trigger a flash appeal (especially in borderline situations where predictable climatic variation widens to cause humanitarian needs), and provide basic rapid needs analysis for appeals that are triggered.

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<sup>6</sup> An exception was the 2007 Pakistan floods, where Islamabad-based donor representatives encouraged the country team to conduct assessments on the ground before launching even an initial appeal.

### **2.3 Perceived over-budgeting**

Funding requests are often perceived by donors to be unfounded. Two types are apparent: over-budgeted projects, and non-humanitarian projects. Pre-agreed, standardised cost ranges may be a way of addressing the former. In the 2006 global cluster appeal, three clusters produced a generic estimated cost for addressing needs in their sectors for a hypothetical emergency of 500,000 people. Since then OCHA has encouraged the global clusters to formalise these estimates as a budget starting point for flash appeals, but so far the global cluster leads have not made progress. The IASC CAP SWG should request the global cluster leads to go ahead with this generic estimation.

### **2.4 Encroachment of non-humanitarian projects**

Most flash appeal projects that donors perceive as 'non-humanitarian' are labelled as early recovery. Some flash appeals before 2007 requested huge sums for early recovery (Bangladesh Floods Flash Appeal 2004, Tsunami Flash Appeal 2005, Pakistan Earthquake Flash Appeal 2005). In 2007, early recovery requests have generally been much more restrained (see table below): the 'Economic Recovery and Infrastructure' sector (albeit an imperfect proxy for early recovery) comprises only 11% of flash appeal funding requests. Nonetheless, common sense suggests that early recovery projects should be proposed in a flash appeal's rapid first edition only if they have been reliably assessed (including reasonable inference), and if they have a strong rationale for beginning sooner rather than later, and if they can be completed roughly within the flash appeal's six-month planning horizon. The IASC should formally adopt a policy governing early recovery requests in flash appeals, such as that drafted in 2007 by UNDP and IOM.

### **2.5 Flash appeals left unrevised**

Flash appeals, especially if they are rapid, should be revised a month after initial publication, to incorporate more accurate information and government recovery plans. However, in 2007, only three out of 15 flash appeals were revised; moreover two of those revisions (Madagascar and Dominican Republic) had the purpose of adding new projects in response to further storms rather than updating the original plan and projects. Leaving a flash appeal unrevised misses an opportunity to improve the targeting of resources, and to maximise the quality and quantity of assistance to beneficiaries. The IASC should enforce the practice of revising appeals, with the option to close an appeal (reduce its unmet requirements to zero) if the country team is unwilling to revise it.

### **2.6 Interaction between CERF and flash appeals**

Despite a perception that flash appeals in 2007 are very poorly funded, their funding percentage has in fact been only somewhat lower than previous years: the average response is 56% (and rising), compared to 69% for all flash appeals issued in 2006 (excluding the over-funded Lebanon flash appeal, which skews the average), 67% in 2005 (excluding the Tsunami flash appeal for the same reason), and 48% in 2004.

However, CERF is mainly responsible for keeping 2007 funding levels close to the historical average. CERF has contributed 34% (\$69 million) of the total funding to date for 2007 flash appeals (\$204 million). By contrast, in 2006, CERF provided 22% (\$60 million) of total flash appeal funding (\$273 million, counting quasi-flash appeals such as the Ethiopia floods appeals).

Some donors appear to take the view that their contributions to CERF replace their previous direct flash appeal funding. This coincides with speculation that the CERF process could replace flash appeals, at least in the early phase of disaster response, by funding urgent projects in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, based on a skeletal strategic plan. This initial CERF allocation would be followed by a more detailed "disaster appeal" (which might justify a second CERF allocation).<sup>7</sup> A variant of this idea is that CERF could be designated to respond to small/medium-scale disasters, hence defining a financial threshold for flash appeal activation: for example, CERF could serve as the exclusive funding mechanisms for disaster response needs up to several million dollars.

However, there are several counter-arguments to these ideas:

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<sup>7</sup> In order for this to work, CERF may have to relax the amount of project detail required in its funding applications for the initial phase. Note that the IFRC counterpart to CERF, the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), requires only a couple of lines to justify a request.

- ◆ CERF is a funding mechanism ('supply side'), while the flash appeal is a strategic planning forum ('demand side') – albeit an embryonic one in the first days after a disaster;
- ◆ Donors, including CERF, need a common action plan to serve as the basis for their funding decisions;
- ◆ Funding needs for most disasters exceed what CERF can provide at its current size;
- ◆ NGOs have funding needs that CERF cannot meet but flash appeals can highlight.

Since the CERF's inception, OCHA has advised country teams that flash appeals and CERF applications should be developed in parallel, with the flash appeal noting the amount committed by CERF, and CERF in effect kick-starting the response to the flash appeal. This has been practiced in most 2007 flash appeals. Nonetheless, in practice country teams evidently find it hard to pursue CERF requests and flash appeal development simultaneously and complete both processes fast enough. OCHA/IASC should therefore explore ways to improve synergy between CERF and flash appeals, and to support inexperienced country teams to use both tools on time.

Although the funding patterns of some donors suggest that they are substituting their contributions to CERF for part of their previous direct funding to flash appeals, the vast majority of donors state verbally that the above counter-arguments are stronger, and that CERF requests and flash appeals should continue to interact along the lines of current practice, though with improvements in the practice. (A practical observation by one donor is that CERF tends to fund the most urgent and feasible projects, leaving little that is attractive for other donors to fund until the response develops.)

OCHA also holds that the counter-arguments are stronger. However, these suggestions have been in the air ever since CERF was launched, so OCHA welcomes a thorough debate on and conclusion to the question.

## **2.7 Ensuring the implementation of the cluster approach without causing undue delay in flash appeal production**

A potential delaying factor in the issuance of a flash appeal is the implementation of the cluster approach, which takes time in itself and sometimes alienates host governments in such a way that they oppose a flash appeal. At field level, it is observed that the implementation of the cluster approach for flash appeals is useful only if cluster leads can meet very rapidly and give inputs. While the cluster approach should not delay the production of an initial flash appeal, the role of clusters may be much more important during the stage of flash appeal revision.

Of the 11 emergencies in non-CAP countries that led to flash appeals in 2007, the cluster approach was only adopted in three (Mozambique, Madagascar and Pakistan). This practice runs counter to the IASC Guidance Note on the cluster approach which states that "In the event of a sudden major new emergency requiring a multi-sectoral response with the participation of a wide range of international humanitarian actors, the cluster approach should be used from the start in planning and organising the international response." However, the reality is that adoption of the cluster approach is only possible if RCs and country teams are aware in advance of what it means and how to do it, as well as perceiving an incentive to do so.

In the "Rome statement" of November 2007, the IASC Working Group attempted to balance between the difficulties of frequent formal cluster approach invocation (especially with non-humanitarian country teams) and the operational advantages to the best practice embodied therein, by stating "All Country Teams in countries with Humanitarian Coordinators should consider what needs to be done in their countries, as a minimum, to adapt current working methods to conform to cluster approach guidance."<sup>8</sup> For developmentally-oriented country teams with no exposure to cluster principles, such adaptation may be all that is possible in the short timeline in which flash appeals should be issued.

OCHA should pursue its communication and training strategy vis-à-vis RCs and country teams to capacitate them on basic principles, tools and practices of humanitarian response, building on the work already done by OCHA ROs. In parallel, drawing on the Focus Model, Regional Offices should intensify training and workshops vis-à-vis the most vulnerable countries. In addition to contingency

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<sup>8</sup> Rome Statement on Cluster Roll-Out, paragraph 9, adopted at the IASC Working Group (WG) meeting of 5-7 November 2007.

planning, table-top exercises in response should be organised, including rapid assessments, clusters, and flash appeal/CERF preparation. In general, affected states should be more systematically engaged on humanitarian questions before a disaster strikes. This needs to be done at the field level, but also in NY and Geneva. Such an effort should be made at the inter-agency level and not by OCHA alone.

Other measures should also be considered, including better and more systematic sensitisation of potential beneficiary countries and donor countries, and urgent inclusion in preparedness processes (including contingency planning) of clusters' basic guidelines.

## 2.8 Strengthening the participation of NGOs in flash appeals

In all the 2007 flash appeals, NGOs were involved in response/coordination activities, but for various reasons, some or most of them opted not to participate in the flash appeal. In several appeals, for example Nicaragua, Uganda and Ghana, no NGO funding needs were mentioned.

Notwithstanding the importance and role of NGOs in the aftermath of an emergency, the primary responsibility to respond lies with the national authorities of the affected country, and governments are often inclined to reject appeals prepared without their concurrence/participation. In Nicaragua for example, NGOs were involved throughout the process, and they had projects included in the early drafts of appeal. However, national authorities were opposed to the presence of NGOs in the document and did not authorise the launch of the appeal until all references to NGOs were deleted. This delayed the process substantially.

As OCHA ROs assume a greater role in the production of flash appeals, they should ensure that NGOs participate not only in needs identification and prioritisation of action, but also in appeal drafting and project inclusion. Furthermore, cluster leads should register all funding needs of cluster members, including NGOs. This responsibility must be communicated clearly to the field, to avoid United Nations-only flash appeals. Similarly, FTS should be strengthened with research capacity to reflect non-UN response and map where the money goes (flash appeal, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, other international organisations receiving direct funding, national agencies receiving bilateral aid, and other contributions financial or in-kind by neighbours or diaspora).

More broadly, country teams rarely provide in flash appeals an accurate picture of response by non-UN actors such as NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, other international organisations, and national government. This makes a flash appeal unsatisfactory as a forum for strategic planning, mapping needs and identifying gaps. While stakeholders accept that such detailed analysis may not be available in time for a flash appeal's rapid first edition, it should be thoroughly presented in the revision.

**Table 1: Flash appeals 2007: funding requests per sector**

Sector	Sector funding request (\$)	Sector request as % of total
Agriculture	\$46 million	13%
Coordination and support services	\$22 million	6%
Economic recovery and infrastructure	\$40 million	11%
Education	\$18 million	5%
Food	\$110 million	30%
Health	\$55 million	14%
Multi-sector	\$0.7 million	0%
Protection/human rights/rule of law	\$7 million	2%
Safety and security of staff and operations	\$0.5 million	0%
Shelter and non-food items	\$38 million	10%
Water and sanitation	\$33 million	9%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$373 million</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Flash Appeals in 2007, per region and type of disaster**

<b>per region</b>	Southern Africa	5	<b>per type of disaster</b>	Hurricanes/Cyclones	4
	South America	3		Floods	8
	East Africa	2		Droughts	2
	West Africa	2		Earthquake	1
	Asia	1			
	Caribbean				
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>

**Table 3: Flash appeals 2007: details**

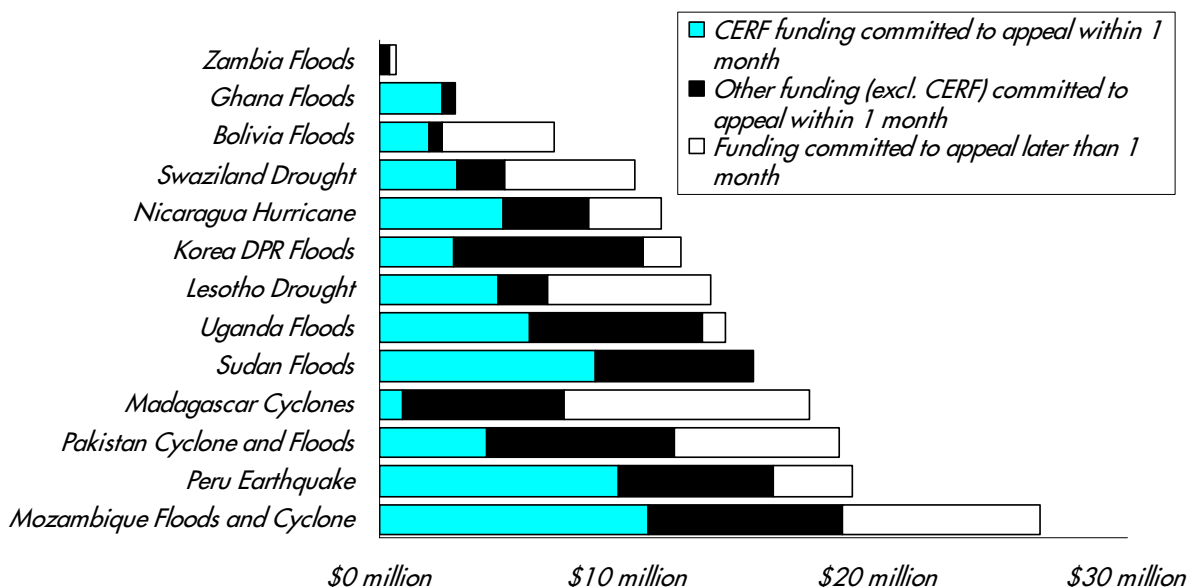
Country	Type of disaster	Date of disaster <sup>9</sup>	Date flash appeal issued	# days disaster - appeal	Funding requested	Funding received (% of request)
Zambia	Floods	16-Jan-07	27-Mar-07	70	\$9 million	7%
Bolivia	Floods	18-Jan-07	22-Feb-07	35	\$14 million	52%
Mozambique	Cyclone and floods	04-Feb-07	12-Mar-07	36	\$39 million	69%
Madagascar	Cyclones	20-Feb-07	15-Mar-07	23	\$19 million	86%
Swaziland	Drought	31-May-07	24-Jul-07	54	\$19 million	78%
Lesotho	Drought	12-Jun-07	28-Jul-07	46	\$23 million	78%
Pakistan	Cyclone and floods	19-Jun-07	15-Jul-07	26	\$43 million	44%
Sudan	Floods	05-Jul-07	28-Aug-07	54	\$35 million	47%
Korea DPR	Floods	12-Aug-07	27-Aug-07	15	\$15 million	106%
Burkina Faso	Floods	13-Aug-07	31-Oct-07	79	\$6 million	3%
Peru	Earthquake	15-Aug-07	28-Aug-07	13	\$38 million	55%
Uganda	Floods	20-Aug-07	21-Sep-07	32	\$41 million	47%
Nicaragua	Hurricane	04-Sep-07	14-Sep-07	10	\$42 million	37%
Ghana	Floods	07-Sep-07	04-Oct-07	27	\$12 million	53%
Dominican Rep.	Hurricane & floods	29-Oct-07	06-Nov-07	8	\$19 million	37%
<b>Totals</b>				<b>ave. 35</b>	<b>\$373 million</b>	<b>56%</b>

**Table 4: CERF funding in 2007 flash appeals**

Appeal	CERF funding	total funding	CERF funding as % of requirements	CERF funding as % of total funding
Bolivia	2,000,000	7,443,140	14%	27%
Burkina Faso	0	1,185,784	0%	0%
Dominican Rep.	3,879,893	7,223,213	20%	54%
Ghana	2,496,956	6,566,308	21%	38%
Korea DPR	3,000,000	15,344,867	20%	20%
Lesotho	4,742,070	17,682,198	21%	27%
Madagascar	3,431,553	16,778,357	18%	20%
Mozambique	11,162,980	26,582,033	29%	42%
Nicaragua	4,975,500	16,686,748	12%	30%
Pakistan	5,806,965	20,695,578	14%	28%
Peru	9,591,713	21,195,182	25%	45%
Sudan	8,679,942	16,243,577	25%	53%
Swaziland	3,136,815	14,666,665	17%	21%
Uganda	6,001,015	20,386,962	15%	29%
Zambia	0	1,101,840	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68,905,402</b>	<b>209,782,452</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>33%</b>

<sup>9</sup> For the gradual-onset disasters – floods and drought – the date of the first international report is cited.

**Table 5: 2007 Flash appeals: funding within a month after appeal launch, and later**



**Table 6: Flash Appeal funding history since 2003**

Year	number of flash appeals (FAs)	FA funding needs (\$)	Median funding need per FA	FA needs as % of total CAP/FA needs	FA funding received	FA funding received as % of FA needs
2003	2	\$31 million	n/a	1%	\$16 million	51%
2004	9	\$451 million	\$33 million	13%	\$179 million	40%
2005*	10	\$2,181 million	\$20 million	36%	\$1,766 million	81%
2006	6	\$268 million	\$35 million	5%	\$214 million	80%
2007	15	\$368 million	\$19 million	7%	\$209 million	56%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>\$3,299 million</b>	<b>\$29 million</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>\$2,379 million</b>	<b>72%</b>
<i>*2005 excl. Tsunami</i>	9	\$781 million		17%	\$518 million	66%



## PROPOSED ACTION POINTS

- 3.1 The IASC should revise the existing Guidelines for Flash Appeals<sup>10</sup> and agree a leaner flash appeal template. The initial appeal should be a minimal immediate needs document with a skeletal action plan confined to evident needs (including those that are reasonably inferred), and conservative funding requests. The revised guidelines should clarify to country teams the nature of information, analysis, joint planning and decisions they are expected to produce in a flash appeal. A flash appeal should be issued within ideally five days, and no more than seven days, of a disaster.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.2 The IASC should adopt an advocacy strategy towards governments in disaster-prone countries. Efforts should concentrate on capacitating authorities in disaster management while lobbying donor countries to invest more in prevention and mitigation. The advocacy strategy should not be aimed at “systematic use” of international assistance.
- 3.3 The IASC should consider authorizing an optional variant on the name “flash appeal,” to make them more palatable to appeal-averse governments.<sup>12</sup> (However, to put this problem in perspective, while such aversion is sometimes a significant obstacle to the issuance of flash appeals, in fact in a majority of cases a proposal to issue a flash appeal does not meet with resistance from the host government. Among the 15 flash appeals issued in 2007, only two host governments were seriously reluctant; there were two additional cases in which host government reluctance was a factor in deciding not to issue a flash appeal.)
- 3.4 The IASC could work with the Development system to ensure reference to flash appeals is placed within UNDAF processes and documents, with a requisite level of capacity development, training and sensitisation.
- 3.5 The IASC should ask the ERC to ensure and enforce the practice of revising flash appeals some weeks after initial publication to incorporate more reliable information, enhance credibility, and stimulate thorough assessment and planning. The option to reduce the unmet funding needs of an unrevised appeal to zero should be considered. The revision process should be a rolling one: as the clusters begin their work, and more information becomes available, the assessment of need can gradually be updated, and new projects and financial requirements added. An ‘event’ or publication one month or so after the initial launch would still be required to ensure proper communication with the donors.
- 3.6 Global cluster leads should deploy technical experts and cluster organisers to support inexperienced country teams, in the event of sudden-onset disasters.
- 3.7 OCHA should develop guidance, and be prepared to provide necessary support, to help country teams with the practicalities of doing CERF applications and a flash appeal at the same time.
- 3.8 Global cluster leads should develop standard or generic project budgeting tools, including cluster templates, for flash appeals, based on an estimate of generic per capita costs of response in each sector. This could serve as an indicative guide in budgeting appeal projects, and thereby improve the predictability, transparency and accuracy of costs, as well as save time in issuing appeals. IASC should request global cluster leads to proceed with this task.
- 3.9 Global clusters leads should define standard rapid needs assessments for each sector, with a view to making their use the standard by which to judge the scale and severity of a disaster.
- 3.10 The IASC should clarify who has the ultimate responsibility for deciding on the scale and content of the flash appeal and its various components. The RC’s office often has insufficient humanitarian capacity to ensure that appeal content is proportionate to need, realistic and/or

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<sup>10</sup> Adopted by the IASC CAP SWG in October 2006: <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/DocView.asp?DocID=1397>.

<sup>11</sup> Or of its declaration, in the case of slow-onset disasters.

<sup>12</sup> A re-naming of flash appeals, to “disaster response plan”, “disaster appeal” or similar, would require an IASC WG amendment to its 2003 ‘nomenclature’ paper.

relevant. OCHA, supported by the IASC CAP Sub-Working Group (SWG), should backstop the RC to ensure good project selection and budgeting.<sup>13</sup>

- 3.11 The IASC should adopt guidelines on the inclusion of early recovery in flash appeals.<sup>14</sup> Early recovery projects in the initial appeal should be limited to those that (1) are justified by existing needs assessment information or at least solid inference, and (2) have a strong advantage in starting immediately, and (3) can be implemented in the first one to three months, with an immediate impact on the ground. Further early recovery projects justified by subsequent information can be proposed in the appeal revision.
- 3.12 IASC should develop guidelines for the interaction between individual agency appeals and flash appeals. Donors are concerned by the tendency of individual agencies to issue solo appeals prior to flash appeal publication, and see this as a fragmentation of response methods. Individual appeals should be coordinated and rolled into the inter-agency appeal.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.13 The United Nations Development Programme / Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP/BCPR) should highlight disaster management skills in RC assessments and place greater emphasis on practical disaster management in RC induction training. OCHA's humanitarian coordination system strengthening project should also contribute to increasing familiarity among RC/HCs with the flash appeal process. Further, UNDP/BCPR should adopt standard instructions to development-oriented country teams to assist their rapid transition to "disaster mode" once a disaster strikes.

## **MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (OCHA AND IASC)**

### **4.1 Recommendations related to preparedness**

4.1.1 OCHA should record historical, operational data on national and international responses to previous disasters, building on the Who What Where (3W) mapping tool developed by FIS. As OCHA improves its baselines on preparedness and response capacity, this should be cross-referenced with country-level vulnerability levels pre-disaster, as per the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office's (ECHO's) humanitarian benchmarking system.

4.1.2 IASC should agree on basic standard indicators and related thresholds to measure the severity/scale of a disaster, with a view to improving the reliability of stated funding needs in flash appeals.<sup>16</sup>

4.1.3 OCHA/IASC should further develop and make use of standardised rapid needs assessments for the purpose of improving quality and timeliness of flash appeals, and to enable comparison of needs across disasters/countries. In this task, OCHA should seek input from IFRC, drawing in particular on IFRC's vulnerability and capacity assessment methodology.<sup>17</sup>

### **4.2 Recommendations related to financing**

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<sup>13</sup> This would respond to a longstanding demand by donors for better prioritisation of actions proposed in flash appeals.

<sup>14</sup> Based on a draft policy on regulating early recovery in flash appeals, prepared by UNDP and IOM for the CAP SWG in 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Faster issuance of flash appeals will go a long way to solving this problem.

<sup>16</sup> In 2008, key indicators for determining the severity and scale of crises will be identified through the Assessment and Classification of Emergencies (ACE) mapping, in consultation with humanitarian actors (United Nations, IFRC, NGOs). These will be incorporated into a pilot "common humanitarian classification system", which will be field-tested in two countries. This initiative will build on the work of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system developed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Food Security Assessment Unit in Somalia.

<sup>17</sup> Some relevant work has already started within OCHA, on making use of proxy indicators to gather disaggregated baseline impact data across an affected area within 2-3 weeks of a disaster, in order to establish an inventory of all affected communities; identification of most-affected communities; calculation of relief needs; baseline for coordination and monitoring. See "Using proxy indicators to assess impact and needs in sudden-onset disasters: initial concept paper," Craig Williams, OCHA ROAP, Bangkok, December 2007.

4.2.1 OCHA/IASC should make the method for CERF's initial allocation more objective and transparent, by developing a standard method for initially calculating the amount that CERF provisionally allocates to a new disaster (which agencies have often called arbitrary), pending submission of suitable projects and to be around 10-20% of the amount of the Appeal.

4.2.2 OCHA should seek to use an existing CAP in lieu of flash appeal, where possible. In many cases, existing CAPs can be used to accommodate the additional requirements of a new emergency in lieu of a flash appeal.

## ANNEX: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Assessment and Classification of Emergencies
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CRD	Coordination and Response Division
DPPT	Disaster Preparedness Planning Training
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EPS	Emergency Preparedness Section
ER	Early Recovery
ERB	External Relations Branch
ESB	Emergency Services Branch
EWCPs	Early Warning and Contingency Planning Section
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCSS	Field Coordination Support Section
FIS	Field Information Services
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GA	General Assembly
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for the Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDRA	National Disaster Response Advisor
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
RC	Resident Coordinator
RO	Regional Office
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SWG	Sub-Working Group
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WG	Working Group