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FINANCE COMMITTEE

C**Rome, 18 - 22 May 2020****Report on the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities
(SFERA)**

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Mr Dominique Burgeon
Director
Emergency and Resilience Division
Tel: +3906 5705 3803

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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 2019, SFERA received USD 249 million, of which USD 105.3 million were allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. sudden onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, locust outbreaks, Fall army worm and protracted crises); USD 53.5 million were disbursed under the AIRC window; USD 28 million were used to set up or reinforce country office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation; USD 13.7 million were allocated to the Level 3 emergencies preparedness and response window; and USD 9.7 million were contributed to the early action window.
- Since SFERA's inception, USD 412.4 million have been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 21.5 million were advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as at 31 December 2019 amounted to USD 0.3 million, while SFERA's cash balance as at 31 December 2019 was USD 38.6 million.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- This document is provided for information.

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

1. 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.

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

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3. 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"> • Emergency coordination and response capacity window • Needs assessment and programme development 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

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

² FC 102/14.

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

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.

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

Table 2. SFERA funding receipts

Contributors	Since Inception USD (000)	Jan-Dec 2019 USD (000)
Australia	107	0
Austria	1 131	6
Belgium	54 961	4 704
Canada	9 583	294
Chile	5	0
China	500	0
Czech	36	0
Finland	3 747	2
France	8 969	98
Germany	1 305	0
Greece	227	0
Ireland	6 229	2 777
Italy	1 490	0
Japan	430	0
Jordan	60	0
Kuwait	50	0
Lao People’s Democratic Republic	14	0
Luxembourg	8	0
Monaco	59	0
Netherlands	4 463	1
New Zealand	13	0
Norway	34 472	0
Saudi Arabia	1 377	0
South Africa	452	0
Spain	520	0
Sweden	30 581	2 306
Switzerland	4 939	2
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	9 339	0
Holy See	30	0
Others (less than 5 000)	37	0

Total Members	175 134	10 190
Direct Operating Costs	73 021	8 340
Opec fund	481	
Total UN	505	200
Total Received	249 141	18 730

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

* Accounting reclassifications

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

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

Table 3. Funding components

	Since inception (USD 000)	January - December 2019 (USD 000)
ADVANCES		
Working component		
Total advances made during the period	412 392	21 502
Refunds on advances paid during the period	412 127	28 849
Outstanding advances	265	
APPLICATIONS		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	15 357	50
Needs assessment and programme development missions	12 656	200
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response	13 747	4 500
Total revolving component	41 760	4 750
PROGRAMME COMPONENT		
<i>AIRC</i>	53 487	2 320
<i>Early action</i>	9 696	4 496
<i>Thematic and regional window</i>	105 317	2 777
Horn of Africa (regional programmes)	13 748	228
The Sahel (regional programmes)	3 552	910
Avian influenza campaign	45 928	
Tsunami campaign	10 002	
Initiative on soaring food crisis	1 168	
Locust campaign	4 982	
Protracted crisis	4 786	1 138
Typhoon and hurricane	15 598	

El Niño	4 552	
Fall armyworm	1 001	501
Subtotal programme component	168 500	9 593
Grand total applications	210 260	14 343
SFERA balance	38 615	

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

Table 4. SFERA advances from resource partners

Resource partner	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
United States of America	16 102	16 102
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	4 500	6 500
Germany	0	2 544
Norway	0	2 000
Belgium	500	500
Italy	400	400
Canada	0	340
France	0	200
New Zealand	0	135
World Food Programme	0	127
Total	21 502	28 849

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

Table 5. SFERA advances for country programmes

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

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

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

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

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

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16. 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	66
Burkina Faso	35
Burundi	40
Cameroon	45
Central African Republic	23
Colombia	4
Democratic Republic of the Congo	254
Haiti	70
Iraq	60
Lebanon	53
Mozambique	6
Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali	10
Nigeria	10
Somalia and South Sudan	10
South Sudan	35
Syrian Arab Republic	21
United Republic of Tanzania	33
Turkey	117
Uganda	56
Ukraine	30
Venezuela	188
Total allotment	1 166

17. 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
Albania	14
Bahamas	45
Cameroon	10
Central African Republic	35
Colombia	65
Comoros	29
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	65
Haiti	6
India	30
Iran	15
Iraq	20
Lao People's Democratic Republic	27
Madagascar	161
Mozambique	6
Myanmar	8
Nicaragua and Honduras	52

Niger	5
Philippines	44
Sudan	25
Timor-Leste	75
Uganda	4
Venezuela	46
Yemen	10
Zimbabwe	4
Total allotment	805

18. 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 focuses on the following six areas: (i) development and maintenance of appropriate Level 3 emergency procedures; (ii) capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness; (iii) organizational preparedness; (iv) participation in Level 3 interagency processes; (v) Level 3 simulations; and (vi) Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

Preparedness

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

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

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

⁴ FC147/8

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

Response

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

Table 8. Corporate surge and Level 3 emergency response allotments

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

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

25. SFERA Level 3 funds allocated to Burkina Faso have allowed for an immediate reinforcement of the country office capacities to respond to the food security crisis in Burkina Faso caused by insecurity and massive displacement. In the first two weeks of the Scale-up Activation, a mission to support emergency programme development and operations was deployed. In addition, an Emergency Response Manager was recruited and fielded. This enabled an immediate analysis of the humanitarian needs, a human resources gaps evaluation in view of the Scale-up and promoted engagement with key partners. SFERA funding was instrumental in quickly proceeding with the recruitment of key profiles, such as a national Communication Officer, an international Programming Officer and an international Information Management Officer for the Food Security Sector. This long-term reinforcement was complemented with surge missions on communication for training purposes and support on the elaboration of a communication plan; two missions for the Food Security Cluster to support the activation of cluster country-wise and a cash mission to review ongoing and future cash activities.

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

27. In Niger, the SFERA Level 3 funds played a key role in supporting the recruitment of an Emergency and Resilience Programme Specialist. It allowed the country office to develop key

strategic notes to help with resource mobilization. Furthermore, in anticipation of increased procurement activities, the SFERA supported the secondment of a Procurement Specialist to ensure smooth delivery and timing of activities during the rainy season and the pastoral lean season.

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

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

AIRC window

30. Under the AIRC window, USD 4.4 million were received from Belgium and Sweden. Contributions by these donors through this window have supported FAO's country teams to respond quickly to large-scale crisis through the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. The funds were allocated to eight countries to support critical emergency agricultural interventions within the humanitarian response, alongside development of a programmatic response to crises.

Table 9. Funding provided under the AIRC window

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

31. Mozambique endured two large-scale tropical storms in 2019, exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Flooding severely damaged crops just prior to the annual harvest, leading to extensive losses in cereal production as well as losses in seeds and other agricultural inputs/assets. SFERA AIRC funding enabled FAO to quickly procure and distribute maize, bean seeds and agricultural hand tools, empowering 17 690 households to restore their livelihoods. These beneficiary households planted 5 040 ha of land on which they produced 2 850 tonnes of maize, covering 85 percent of their

household cereal needs. They also produced 120 tonnes of bean, covering their consumption needs for one year as well as providing a surplus that could be sold for income. SFERA AIRC intervention contributed to enhance the food security and nutrition of cyclone-affected populations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Early action window

39. 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.

40. 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.

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

Table 10. Early action window funding

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FAW programme window

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

Table 11. Funding provided under the FAW programme window

FAW programme window	Amount USD (000)
Eastern Africa	501
Total	501

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

Protracted crises window

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

Table 12. Funding provided under the protracted crises window

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

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

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

Horn of Africa

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

Table 13. Funding provided under the Horn of Africa window

Country	Amount (USD 000)
Eastern Africa	228
Total	228

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

Sahel

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

Table 14. Funding provided under the Sahel window

Country	Amount (USD 000)
West Africa	341
Chad	569
Total	910

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

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

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

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

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