



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)

Annual report 2021





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## REQUIRED CITATION

FAO. 2022. *Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) – Annual report 2021*. Rome.  
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0902en>

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ISBN 978-92-5-136611-0

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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.

SFERA has three components:

- a working capital component to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis;
- a revolving fund component to support FAO's involvement in needs assessment and programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency<sup>1</sup> preparedness and response activities; and
- a programme component, which pools resources in support of a programme framework for large-scale emergencies or strategically complements ongoing programmes, including the Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity (AIRC) window as well as the Anticipatory Action (AA) window triggered by corporate early warnings.

From its inception in 2004 through 31 December 2021, SFERA received USD 335 million.

Under the programme component:

- USD 154.4 million were allocated to large-scale programmes (e.g. locust response, sudden onset disasters, El Niño response, highly pathogenic avian influenza, protracted crises, and COVID-19);
- USD 68 million were disbursed under the AIRC window; and
- USD 18.1 million under the AA window.

Under the revolving fund component:

- USD 37.2 million were used to set up or reinforce country office emergency response capacities and support needs assessments and programme formulation; and
- USD 15.8 million were allocated to the Level 3 emergencies preparedness and response window.

Since SFERA's inception, under its working capital component, USD 494.8 million have been advanced to fund immediate emergency projects, of which USD 22.7 million were advanced over the reporting period. Outstanding advances as at 31 December 2021 amounted to USD 7.3 million.

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







# Background

During its Hundred and Second Session in May 2003, the Finance Committee supported the creation of 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 resource partner’s commitment has been obtained.”<sup>2</sup>

This annual report provides a brief description of the major operations initiated with SFERA funds for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2021. The report contains financial data for this period, as well as data since the Fund became operational.



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

# SFERA set-up

SFERA has three components:

- **a working capital component** to advance funds once a resource partner's commitment is secured toward the immediate procurement of inputs to protect livelihoods, restart agricultural activities or contribute to an immediate response to a crisis;
- **a revolving fund component** to support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO's) involvement in needs assessment, programme development, early establishment and reinforcement of emergency country team capacities, Level 3 emergency<sup>3</sup> preparedness and response activities; and
- **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 the Anticipatory Action (AA) window triggered by corporate early warnings.

**Table 1. SFERA components and windows**

Working capital component	Revolving fund component	Programme component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advances to enable rapid response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency coordination and response capacity window</li> <li>• Needs assessment and programme development window</li> <li>• Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-scale programme window (e.g. sudden onset disasters, highly pathogenic avian influenza, the Sahel, El Niño, protracted crises and COVID-19)</li> <li>• Agricultural Inputs Response Capacity window</li> <li>• Anticipatory Action window</li> </ul>

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.

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

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

# SFERA resources

**Receipts** – Since SFERA’s inception in April 2004, the Fund has received a total of USD 335 million. Of this amount, USD 236.9 million were provided by the Members listed in **Table 2**, including USD 9.5 million provided by resource partners that transferred the balances of closed emergency projects to SFERA. During the period of January–December 2021, deposits to SFERA amounted to USD 12.9 million.

**Table 2. SFERA funding receipts**

Contributors	Since inception (USD 000)	January–December 2021 (USD 000)
Australia	107	0
Austria	1 131	0
Belgium	68 473	6 108
Canada	11 373	234
Chile	5	0
China	500	0
Czechia	36	0
Finland	3 747	0
France	9 495	223
Germany	4 062	1 745
Greece	227	0
Holy See	30	0
Ireland	7 424	0
Italy	1 490	0
Japan	430	0
Jordan	60	0
Kuwait	50	0
Lao People’s Democratic Republic	14	0
Luxembourg	8	0
Malta	23	12
Monaco	59	0
Netherlands	9 681	1
New Zealand	13	0
Norway	34 472	0
Others (less than 5 000)	41	4
Saudi Arabia	1 377	0
South Africa	452	0
Spain	520	0
Sweden	38 644	3 157
Switzerland	4 942	0
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	38 105	1 416
<b>Total from Members</b>	<b>236 991</b>	<b>12 900</b>
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	10 000	0
DoC/OPEC Fund	86 468	9 620
Louis Dreyfus Foundation	108	0
United Nations Children’s Fund	683	180
United Nations Development Programme	87	0
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	156	0
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	324	324
World Bank	21	0
World Food Programme	129	0
<b>Total received</b>	<b>334 965</b>	<b>23 024</b>

As of 31 December 2021 – Source: compiled from subsidiary records and agreed to the general ledger

Needs have increased dramatically in recent years – 2020 saw a surge in the number of people afflicted by acute food insecurity. The number rose to 155 million, driven by three main factors: (i) conflict; (ii) economic shocks exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and (iii) climate shocks. This represents a significant increase of around 20 million people compared with 2019 and raises a stark warning about a worrisome trend: acute food insecurity has been on the rise since 2017. The scale of need is daunting, and there is a need to increase financial resources in order to halt the steady climb of acute hunger. Urgent humanitarian action is needed on a massive scale to prevent famine. Even before an official famine declaration is made, it is already too late. In the 2010/11 famine in Somalia, half of those who died did so before famine thresholds were reached. Preventing famine starts by providing the most vulnerable with the means to produce food where it is needed most. Between 60 and 80 percent of people currently in high acute food insecurity are farmers, herders, fishers and foresters in rural areas and reliant on agriculture for their survival. In cut-off, highly inaccessible areas and in isolated rural areas, the critical role of local and backyard food production in keeping families alive cannot be underemphasized. And the importance of sustaining livestock cannot be overstated. For a family on the edge, just one cup of milk a day can make the difference between life and death.

Agricultural production is possible even in difficult crisis contexts. For instance, in **South Sudan**, FAO airdrops of fishing kits and vegetable seeds allow people who have fled fighting and are hiding in remote swamplands to catch fish, grow produce, and stay alive. In **Afghanistan**, FAO veterinary care, animal feed and cash transfers provide a lifeline to vulnerable herders caught between conflict and climate extremes. In **northern Nigeria**, FAO seed kits matched to the growing seasons combined with fertilizers help families grow food all year long. This support, along with the provision of animals, animal feed and poultry production kits, has assisted people coping with Boko Haram violence for years, and keeps famine at bay. FAO is on the ground, providing desperately needed livelihoods assistance to support rural people in continuing to produce and access food. As a flexible and quick mechanism, SFERA plays a critical role to facilitate this support.

The funding requirements for humanitarian crises have increased tenfold from USD 3.4 billion in 2004 to nearly USD 35.2 billion in 2021. As of 30 June 2005, the balance of SFERA was USD 9.9 million (see FC 110/11). Had the balance of the Fund followed the path of the evolution of humanitarian needs, it would be in the range of USD 100 million.

In view of the growing number of crises and responses, the resources received in 2021 were critical for the effective functioning of the working capital component, enabling a quick and at-scale response. With a balance of USD 34.1 million, SFERA can support two Level 3 emergencies, occurring over a relatively short period, speeding up the procurement process to respond to the most urgent needs. Additional efforts are required to reach a target of USD 75 million, which would ensure a fully flexible and efficient SFERA, providing the tool to cope with three simultaneous large-scale crises.





# Use of SFERA funds

Under the working capital component, USD 494.8 million was advanced to projects after resource partners' commitment, but before receiving the cash contributions. Of this amount, USD 7.3 million remains outstanding, pending receipt of resource partner funds.

Of the USD 335 million contributed, USD 53 million were approved under the revolving fund component (USD 6.4 million during the reporting period). A total of USD 240.5 million was allocated under the programme component, of which USD 154.4 million was disbursed under the thematic and regional window. The use of funds is detailed in **Table 3**.

**Table 3. Funding components**

Component	Since inception (USD 000)	January–December 2021 (USD 000)
<b>Advances</b>		
<b>Working capital component</b>		
Total advances made during the period	494 847	22 725
Refunds on advances paid during the period	487 564	25 127
<b>Outstanding advances</b>	<b>7 283</b>	
<b>Applications</b>		
<b>Revolving fund component</b>		
Emergency coordination unit setup and reinforcement	20 156	2 086
Needs assessment and programme development missions	17 054	2 192
Level 3 emergency preparedness and response	15 847	2 100
<b>Total revolving fund component</b>	<b>53 057</b>	<b>6 378</b>
<b>Programme component</b>		
<b>AIRC window</b>	<b>68 028</b>	<b>5 410</b>
<b>AA window</b>	<b>18 083</b>	<b>5 587</b>
<b>Thematic and regional window</b>		
Desert locust campaign	51 105	2 014
Avian influenza campaign	45 928	0
Typhoon and hurricane	15 598	0
Horn of Africa (regional programmes)	13 748	0
Tsunami campaign	10 002	0
Protracted crisis	4 786	0
El Niño	4 552	0
The Sahel (regional programmes)	3 552	0
COVID-19	2 934	0
Initiative on soaring food crisis	1 168	0
Fall armyworm	1 001	0
<b>Subtotal thematic and regional window</b>	<b>154 374</b>	<b>2 014</b>
<b>Subtotal programme component</b>	<b>240 485</b>	<b>13 011</b>
<b>Grand total applications</b>		
<b>SFERA balance</b>	<b>34 136</b>	<b>19 389</b>

## Working capital component

**Advances** – During the reporting period, 76 percent of SFERA advances were in support of projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank as shown in **Table 4**.

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

Resource partner	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
United States of America	12 554	12 554
World Bank	4 813	1 050
Italy	2 045	545
Sweden	1 672	1 857
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1 142	1 142
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	500	0
European Commission	0	7 874
Germany	0	100
World Food Programme	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 725</b>	<b>25 127</b>

Advances mainly supported major programmes covering Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan, representing more than 97 percent of all advances between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2021, as shown in **Table 5**.

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

Country	Advances (USD 000)	Refunds (USD 000)
South Sudan	7 500	7 500
Somalia	4 924	6 024
Afghanistan	4 859	3 359
Central African Republic	4 813	0
Philippines	500	0
Nicaragua	100	100
Ukraine	30	30
Global	0	6 600
Yemen	0	1 050
Viet Nam	0	274
Nigeria	0	185
Pakistan	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 725</b>	<b>25 127</b>

The 2021 lean season in **South Sudan** was forecasted to be the most severe the country has experienced, with 60 percent of the population projected to face Crisis or worse levels of food insecurity, including 2.4 million people who were expected to face Emergency levels. SFERA advances enabled FAO to immediately implement the South Sudan Emergency Livelihood Response Programme, an extensive programme that protects the livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities, improves their food production and strengthens their resilience. Under the programme, FAO provided seasonally-aligned crop, vegetable and fisheries production inputs in the main, second and lean seasons. It also strengthened animal health services, vaccinating animals against priority diseases and contributing to animal disease surveillance, monitoring and reporting. Moreover, herding households, who lost large numbers of animals as a result of flooding, were provided with small ruminants to restore their

livestock-based livelihoods. In addition, FAO delivered market-based nutrition programmes, providing mothers of young children with vouchers to purchase vegetables, eggs, milk and fish in local markets to improve their families' nutrition and strengthen local value chains. Vouchers were also distributed to enable families to purchase poultry and small ruminants.

**Somalia** is highly vulnerable to climate shocks, which have become increasingly frequent in recent years. In 2021, the country experienced severe flooding and an extended dry spell that led to extensive crop losses, devastating agriculture-based livelihoods. To build resilience to such shocks, FAO utilized SFERA advances to reinforce eroded river embankments with gabion boxes through cash for work, improving flood protection and providing short-term employment opportunities to vulnerable community members in Hirshabelle State. Additionally, canals along the Shabelle River were rehabilitated to restore farmers' access to water for irrigation. SFERA advances also enabled FAO to build the capacity of local communities and the government to manage water infrastructure and mitigate flood risks through the Somalia Water and Land Information Management Project. Riverine and agropastoral households were provided with quality crop and vegetable seeds; training on good agricultural practices; and tractor and irrigation hours. Veterinary services were also provided across the country to treat animals with nutrient deficiencies, parasites, wounds and diseases, which was critical, as drought conditions reduce available pasture and trigger the spread of infectious animal disease. FAO also supported the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit by carrying out seasonal food security and nutrition assessments and disseminating the information to improve the emergency response.

In 2021 **Afghanistan** suffered one of the worst food crises globally, as over half of its population faced high acute food insecurity. Eighty percent of Afghans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, and agricultural livelihood systems were on the edge of collapse. Thanks to SFERA advances, FAO swiftly mobilized an emergency response to protect and restore agriculture-based livelihoods, support local food production and build resilience. FAO provided vulnerable farmers with wheat seed and fertilizer combined with training on nutrition-sensitive, climate-smart crop cultivation to ensure that seed was planted in time for the winter season. In addition, FAO provided herders with concentrated animal feed and carried out an animal health campaign to vaccinate and treat animals, safeguarding Afghan herders' critical livestock assets. Cash-for-work activities were implemented to rehabilitate irrigation and flood protection infrastructure. SFERA advances also allowed FAO to disseminate unconditional cash-based transfers to the most vulnerable Afghans, including landless households, women, the elderly and people with disabilities, to enable them to cover their most immediate basic needs. Home gardening kits were distributed along with technical training on vegetable cultivation and integrated pest management to quickly boost access to fresh foods and improve nutrition.

The **Central African Republic** has endured conflict since 2012, and the COVID-19 pandemic worsened its fragile economy. In 2021, over 40 percent of the population faced Crisis or worse levels of food insecurity. SFERA advances allowed FAO to rapidly provide food-insecure households with crop seed, fertilizer and home gardening kits in advance of the main agricultural season. Additionally, small livestock were provided to improve the livelihoods and nutrition of vulnerable households. Moreover, SFERA advances enabled FAO to mobilize additional resources to sustain the positive impacts of the intervention.



## 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. SFERA emergency coordination**

Country	Approved allocation (USD 000)
Burkina Faso and Senegal	15
Cambodia	5
Cameroon	110
Chad	158
Democratic Republic of the Congo	107
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Yemen	95
Dominican Republic	70
Fiji	38
Haiti	175
Iraq	20
Madagascar	50
Nepal	15
Niger	209
Sudan	87
Syrian Arab Republic	43
Tajikistan	20
Timor-Leste	50
Uganda	5
Venezuela	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 372</b>



The **needs assessment and programme development window** of the revolving fund component 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	52
Bangladesh	37
Chad	99
Democratic Republic of the Congo	107
Guinea	61
Haiti	17
Madagascar	212
Mauritania and Senegal	20
Mozambique	82
Nigeria	50
Philippines	50
Sri Lanka	20
Tajikistan	27
Uganda	55
West Bank and Gaza Strip	50
Yemen	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 081</b>

The **Level 3 emergency preparedness and response window** was established under the revolving fund component following the Finance Committee's endorsement at its Hundred and Forty-Seventh Session.<sup>4</sup> This window focuses on (i) preparedness measures and activities strengthening FAO's capacity to respond to large-scale emergencies; and (ii) Level 3 emergency response and corporate surge.

## Preparedness

Under the “**Capacity building for Level 3 emergency preparedness**”, the Capacity Development Unit was established to develop, pilot and redesign operations training. The unit supported the transition from face-to-face to an online training modality in line with COVID-19 safety measures by standardizing global online training for FAO personnel on emergency and resilience operations. From March to May 2021, a fully facilitated simulation-based online training was designed and delivered as a pilot, targeting 16 participants from FAO's Regional Office in the Near East and North Africa (RNE) and the Regional Office for Africa. The training took place online with training modules anchored in three interactive marketplace sessions (human resources, budgets and supply chain) and a slow-onset disaster scenario desktop simulation. The capacity of participants increased, measured by pre- and post-training assessment, to a level where nearly all can work independently and half of the cohort can lead or train others on the training's topic areas. Capacity increases were in line with the target and were consistent with increases achieved in face-to-face trainings. One hundred (100) percent of participants rated the training as “highly relevant” or “relevant”; 81 percent of participants rated the facilitation as excellent; and 87.5 percent of participants rated the training as “priority learning” or “good use of time”.

<sup>4</sup> FC 147/8

A training of trainers was conducted that supported the implementation of the RNE regional project “Towards Risk-informed Response to Natural Disasters in Conflict-affected Areas.” The project aims to pilot approaches and document experiences in implementing disaster risk reduction (DRR) in areas affected by conflict in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The project activities include capacity building of national and local stakeholders on DRR. Given the challenges and restrictions related to COVID-19, country teams from Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen adjusted to the virtual delivery of the training. The RNE Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition and project team sought the support of the Capacity Development Unit to conduct a training for project implementation teams to enable them to: (i) understand the various considerations when designing and delivering an online training (compared with face-to-face); (ii) design an online training responding to specific findings from country assessments and using the DRR training materials shared; and (iii) present draft training plans/sessions, provide feedback and share useful tips and good practices among each other. Twelve people participated in the training of trainers, including FAO and external personnel. FAO personnel were from FAO Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, and external participants were staff from non-governmental organizations and national authorities.

## Response

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

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

Country	Allotment USD (000)
Afghanistan	500
Ethiopia	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 000</b>

SFERA Level 3 funds allocated to **Afghanistan** in September 2021 enabled the rapid mobilization and deployment of internal resources to support the programme scale-up to respond to the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the country. Overall office management support was provided together with assistance on the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan and project formation. In addition, technical and administrative support was offered to identify solutions for cash flow and payment processing in the complex operating context. Funds will also be used to reinforce compliance, procurement, advocacy and communications functions as the programme plans to reach twice the number of people in 2022.

SFERA Level 3 funds allocated to **Ethiopia** in April 2021 covered a number of needs during the most urgent phases of the humanitarian crisis in the Tigray Region. The funds contributed to the establishment and strengthening of FAO decentralized offices in Tigray. Specifically, the logistical team has been strengthened and provided with essential equipment, including computers and a car, to manage the high volume of humanitarian inputs to be distributed in the field in a very complex environment.

## Programme component

Under the SFERA programme component, USD 5.4 million were allocated under the AIRC window, and USD 5.6 million under the AA window.

### AIRC window

Under the AIRC window, USD 5.4 million of funding was received from Belgium, Sweden and Ireland. Contributions by these resource partners have supported FAO's country teams to respond quickly to large-scale crises through the immediate procurement and delivery of time-critical inputs. The funds were allocated to ten countries for the most critical emergency humanitarian agricultural interventions.

**Table 9. Funding provided under the AIRC window**

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Contribution from Belgium</b>		
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Emergency support to host communities affected by the volcanic eruption in North Kivu	250
Ethiopia	Emergency livelihood support for conflict-affected communities in Tigray Region	500
Gaza Strip	Emergency support to vulnerable herders in the Gaza Strip through animal fodder distribution	610
Haiti	Livelihood protection and rehabilitation of populations affected by the earthquake that struck Haiti on 14 August	500
Lebanon	Desert locust emergency assistance	100
Lebanon	Support the effort of the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture towards controlling lumpy skin disease	3*
Madagascar	Emergency agricultural assistance to acutely food-insecure households to mitigate the impacts of a second wave of COVID-19, exacerbated by recurrent climatic and biological hazards in southern Madagascar	400
Niger	Improve food security by supporting the livelihoods of 9 500 rural, vulnerable households in Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéri	500
Syrian Arab Republic	Emergency support to the Syrian Arab Republic to combat desert locust	200
Venezuela	Emergency agriculture assistance to food-insecure and vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19	350
<b>Total Belgium</b>		<b>3 413</b>
<b>Contribution from Sweden</b>		
Burkina Faso	Emergency livelihoods assistance to enhance households' food security in conflict-affected and famine-prone areas of Burkina Faso	700
Niger	Emergency response in agricultural and livestock livelihoods to the most vulnerable population affected by food insecurity in the Niger	700
<b>Total Sweden</b>		<b>1 400</b>
<b>Contribution from Ireland</b>		
Niger	Improving food security, nutrition and resilience of Diffa communities affected by natural shocks, climate change and the Lake Chad Basin conflict	597
<b>Total</b>		<b>5 410</b>

\* USD 3 000 was a top up to the project that began in 2020.





In **Burkina Faso** the number of internally displaced people surpassed 1.2 million as armed conflict intensified in 2021. Droughts and floods also struck the country, reducing agricultural land area and pastures. This harmed transhumance patterns, giving rise to conflict between farming and herding communities over limited natural resources. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO quickly supported the rehabilitation of degraded land through cash for work, increasing the area of arable land. FAO also swiftly supported internally displaced people and host community members, distributing certified cowpea and vegetable seeds. SFERA AIRC funds also enabled FAO to empower women through the provision of unconditional cash-based transfers and training on income-generating activities and financial management.

In May 2021, Mount Nyiragongo volcano erupted near Goma in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. Lava flows destroyed homes and food stocks, and forced the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The massive and sudden internal displacement put enormous pressure on host communities who were already suffering high levels of acute food insecurity. Furthermore, ash fall threatened the summer harvest and the health of livestock. Enabled by SFERA AIRC funding, FAO swiftly provided host community members with short-cycle vegetable seeds that could be harvested during the lean season. In addition, maize, bean seed and small agricultural tools were provided to enable families to prepare for the next planting season. FAO also distributed guinea pigs, poultry and reproducing goats to vulnerable, affected households to provide them with a source of protein to improve their nutrition.

The conflict in the Tigray Region of **Ethiopia** caused a humanitarian crisis in which over 2 million people were displaced and over 5 million faced high acute food insecurity. The conflict began at the peak of the main agricultural season before many households had harvested their crops, and it was estimated that over 90 percent of the harvest was lost. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO rapidly provided improved drought-tolerant teff, onion



and tomato seed along with extension services to enable vulnerable households to restore their livelihoods and produce nutritious food during the lean season. Additionally, FAO contributed to the coordination of food security and livelihoods assistance at the regional level, collecting and disseminating information on agricultural interventions. FAO also provided technical backstopping to partners, including the regional government, to improve the humanitarian response.

The escalation of violence in the **Gaza Strip** led to the destruction of many critical agricultural assets, and livestock holders suffered extensive damages and losses to their herds. It was anticipated that the losses would grow further, as smallholders could not access fodder to feed their animals. To prevent the irreversible loss of vital livestock assets, FAO employed SFERA AIRC funds to rapidly distribute livestock feed to vulnerable small-scale herders.

On 14 August 2021, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck southwestern **Haiti**. Days later, heavy rains caused flooding and landslides, damaging the summer crop and agricultural infrastructure, killing and injuring livestock, and disrupting agricultural input supply chains. FAO utilized SFERA AIRC funds to quickly reach vulnerable households in mountain communities with climate-resilient varieties of beans and maize as well as cassava and sweet potato cuttings to plant before the winter agricultural season. In addition, vegetable seeds and tools, in combination with training on vegetable production, were provided. Goats were distributed to households headed by women and girls to improve their livelihoods and nutrition. Furthermore, FAO strengthened the capacity of veterinary services, training veterinary officers and establishing mobile veterinary clinics to treat sick animals.



Desert locust was detected in the **Syrian Arab Republic** in April 2021 in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, which quickly spread to Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, As-Sweida, Dara'a, Homs and Quneitra governorates. Strong winds also carried the migratory crop pest across the border into **Lebanon**. To immediately contain the outbreaks, FAO employed SFERA AIRC funds to procure and deliver pesticides and control equipment, including ultra-low volume vehicle-mounted sprayers, backpack sprayers and hand-held sprayers, to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in the Syrian Arab Republic and to the Ministry of Agriculture in Lebanon. This protected the agricultural production of farmers whose livelihoods had already been devastated by years of conflict and economic decline. The funding further supported technical training of ministry staff, strengthening local capacity to predict, monitor and control desert locust outbreaks.

The livestock sector in **Lebanon** faced the threat of transboundary animal disease in 2020 and 2021. With outbreaks of lumpy skin disease (LSD) occurring across the border in the Syrian Arab Republic, it was critical to vaccinate cattle against the disease to protect the livelihoods of dairy and beef farmers. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO swiftly procured LSD vaccines and, working with the Ministry of Agriculture, vaccinated large numbers of cattle against the disease, safeguarding the health and productivity of cattle and the livelihoods of pastoral households.

In 2021, over 1 million people in **Madagascar's** Grand Sud faced high acute food insecurity as a result of recurrent climate shocks, including a prolonged drought that began in 2019. A sharp rise in COVID-19 infections in April 2021 threatened to worsen the situation, as restrictions to prevent the spread of the disease were anticipated to constrain the delivery of humanitarian aid. FAO acted swiftly, thanks to SFERA AIRC funding, by providing vulnerable farming families with short-cycle, drought-tolerant vegetable, legume and crop seeds along with small agricultural tools. In addition, cash-based transfers were provided to families to cover their immediate needs while crops were growing. FAO also invested in herders, providing them with improved breeds of poultry and goats, and delivering a vital animal health campaign, vaccinating and treating thousands of animals.

In the **Niger**, exceptional support was provided in 2021 to respond to the effects of dry conditions, bushfires, floods and conflict. Fires destroyed thousands of hectares of pasture, jeopardizing livestock holders' ability to feed their herds. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO protected pastures at high risk of fire, building firewalls through cash for work. FAO also supported agropastoral and pastoral households residing in areas with forage shortages, providing them with high-quality animal feed in the lean season and veterinary care, including vaccination and treatment against parasites. The floods that struck the Niger in 2021 killed livestock and destroyed agricultural production. Utilizing SFERA funds, FAO swiftly distributed rainy season seed, irrigated crop seed and vegetable seed along with agricultural tools, specifically targeting female-headed households and displaced people. FAO also provided pastoral households with small ruminants. Cash-based transfers (cash+) were provided to the most vulnerable households along with agricultural inputs to ensure that their immediate needs were met while they engaged in livelihood activities. The conflict in the Lake Chad Basin led to large numbers of internally displaced people and refugees in Diffa, the most vulnerable region in the country. This has exerted pressure on already vulnerable host communities impacted by droughts and floods. To strengthen livelihoods and improve nutrition and food security, FAO distributed home gardening kits and raised awareness on nutrition, COVID-19 prevention and gender equity. Agropastoral field schools were established to promote good practices in climate-smart agriculture, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources.

Political and economic crises have driven food insecurity and malnutrition in **Venezuela**, and it was expected that food insecurity would worsen in 2021 as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the economy to contract further. With SFERA AIRC funds, FAO quickly distributed rainy and dry season agricultural inputs to vulnerable households in Táchira and Zulia states, specifically targeting migrants, female-headed households and host community members. Furthermore, FAO supported local seed multiplication, contracting indigenous farmers' organizations to produce seed and providing them with technical training. SFERA AIRC funding also supported the "homegrown" and nutrition-oriented integrated production model, providing short-cycle and staple crop seeds, tools and irrigation systems to a farmer field school and to women-led organizations, and promoting technical exchanges among local farmers.



## Anticipatory Action window

Anticipatory Action (AA) is an approach that translates early warnings into activities that reduce the impact of disasters. These activities can consist of different prevention and mitigation measures, which vary depending on the anticipated hazard, the context and sectors at risk. Some key parameters that characterize AA are:

- **Timing:** AA interventions should be implemented ahead of a hazard's impact. More specifically, for sudden onset events, AA interventions should be implemented before the hazard (e.g. prior to a cyclone making landfall) while for slow onset events, these should be implemented before the peak of the impact;
- **Forecast:** AA interventions should be triggered by an early warning/forecast information, combined with analysis of the current situation; and
- **Objective:** the action's objective is to protect the food security and agricultural livelihoods of the most vulnerable families from the potential impact of hazards, and building their resilience to future shocks.

FAO is among the agencies leading global efforts in testing and upscaling AA approaches to prevent food crises. Curbing the deterioration of food security is crucially linked with protecting livelihoods and people's means to sustain themselves, and their food security. FAO's AA aims to protect agricultural assets and livelihoods from the impact of hazards in order to prevent the adoption of negative coping strategies which lead to hunger and destitution.

The SFERA AA window enables country offices to access the kind of pre-allocated financing necessary for the timely implementation of AA interventions. It releases funds upon accurate early warning signals of an impending disaster, also called triggers. The trigger mechanisms are adapted to the context and priority hazards. They are based on quantitative thresholds (e.g. based on climate forecasts, food security projections, remote sensing data, etc.), and corroborated with qualitative information and expert judgement.

In 2021, FAO implemented AA interventions in 14 countries funded through SFERA AA as shown in **Table 10**. Under the AA window, USD 5.6 million of funding was received from Belgium, Germany and Sweden. Evidence shows that rapid, flexible and anticipatory financing prevents humanitarian needs at lower costs, through a more dignified and empowering form of assistance.





**Table 10. Funding provided under the AA window**

Country	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Contributions from Sweden</b>		
Central African Republic	Establishment of strategic stocks of agricultural inputs to mitigate the anticipated humanitarian consequences of conflict	600
Kenya	AA to mitigate the expected effects of below-average rainfall on food security and livelihoods in northeastern Kenya	579
<b>Total Sweden</b>		<b>1 179</b>
<b>Contributions from Belgium</b>		
Afghanistan	Curbing the potential impacts of La Niña-induced dry conditions/drought	580
Bangladesh	Protecting livelihood assets through AAs in flood-prone communities in northern Bangladesh	200
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Setting up strategic stocks of agricultural inputs to mitigate anticipated humanitarian consequences of conflict	585
El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras	Implementing AAs to protect agriculture-based livelihoods and food security from the impacts of drought	500
Interregional (Mauritania and Senegal)	Integrated action to anticipate, prevent and control pest outbreaks in agricultural areas in Mauritania and Senegal	300
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	AA to mitigate the risk of volcanic eruption	102
<b>Total Belgium</b>		<b>2 268</b>
<b>Contributions from Germany</b>		
Madagascar	AA to avert a Malagasy migratory locust upsurge	961
Myanmar	AA to mitigate a potential food crisis affecting vulnerable communities in Rakhine State and Ayeyarwady Region	600
Syrian Arab Republic	AA to protect wheat farmers from below-average rainfall projected for the second half of 2021 in crisis-affected parts of the Syrian Arab Republic	580
<b>Total Germany</b>		<b>2 141</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>5 588</b>

In September 2020, the global El Niño–Southern Oscillation cell included **Afghanistan** among the countries at highest risk of being affected by La Niña-induced drought in the first half of 2021. This information was analysed along with national and subregional data, which pointed towards below-average precipitation, high temperatures and persistent dry conditions across the country. The timing coincided with the main wheat season, which provides critical staple food following the lean season. The SFERA AA fund was immediately activated with the support of the Government of Belgium, enabling FAO and partners to assist vulnerable communities beginning in January 2021, i.e. six months before the official drought declaration. FAO provided wheat crop protection packages, cash for work to rehabilitate and repair local irrigation systems, livestock protection packages, and sensitization on COVID-19-safe practices.

Floods are an annual occurrence in **Bangladesh**, and the risk weighs heavily over families when the monsoon season begins. In July 2020, FAO and partners in Bangladesh used state-of-the-art data collection and predictive analytics to anticipate when flooding would peak, allowing them to intervene in advance. This helped farming families secure their livestock and essential assets before the floods struck. To help prepare for the 2021 season, FAO used SFERA AA to ensure preparedness activities were in place to provide timely interventions ahead of a flood warning, which is only five days. Luckily, the flood season was mild in the Jamuna River basin in Bangladesh during 2021 and FAO instead employed its ‘no-regrets’ approach to use the funds to support households in other parts of the country experiencing floods.

In the **Central African Republic**, renewed activism of armed groups in the run-up to the general elections of December 2020 and February 2021 weakened the already precarious humanitarian situation, resulting in large-scale displacement and food price spikes. In April 2021, a large number of recently displaced people was expected to return to their villages without any productive assets nor the inputs to cultivate during the upcoming agricultural season. The SFERA AA fund was activated, thanks to the contribution of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, which allowed FAO to pre-position stocks of agricultural inputs in order to rapidly distribute them to vulnerable returnee and host community households, thus avoiding a further deterioration of food security.

The security context in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** remains of concern, causing repeated population displacements. Considering the high risk of further spikes in violence throughout 2021 and the already dire food security situation, FAO launched an Anticipatory Action project in early 2021 that was funded through SFERA AA with the support of the Government of Belgium. The project aimed at mitigating the immediate consequences of conflict-induced displacement on food security by boosting food production through the distribution of crop seed and tools, targeting displaced people, returnees and host communities. In order to ensure the timeliness of the intervention, strategic stocks of agricultural inputs were pre-positioned in the areas where new episodes of violence or conflict were likely to occur, and distribution was prompted by early warning information available at the subnational level.

Climate and hydro-agricultural changes are profoundly modifying the ecosystems in the Sahel: one of the observed consequences is the increased proliferation of rodents that damage crops and threaten agricultural production and related livelihoods. A rapid assessment conducted in March 2021 showed an abundance of rodents in the Senegal River valley along the border between **Senegal and Mauritania**, and warned about an expected rapid proliferation due to an early resumption of reproductive activity. Rodents were expected to severely damage large areas of irrigated rice fields, with cascading effects on food security. SFERA AA was activated, thanks to the contribution of the Government of Belgium, in order to support the governments of the two countries with control operations. The project also provided quality rice seeds to vulnerable households in order to encourage the resumption of rice planting together with the implementation of community control measures.

In March 2021, forecasts pointed to a below-average long rains season (April–June) in northeastern parts of **Kenya**. This would have been the second consecutive failed rainy season in addition to the impacts of desert locust, thus further driving the rapid deterioration of pastoral resources in the area and posing a significant threat to the food security of pastoral households. SFERA AA was activated, thanks to the contribution of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, to protect livestock assets before drought impacts materialized, through the provision of cash, animal feed and animal health support (cash+) to vulnerable pastoral households in Garissa, Mandera, Tana River and Wajir counties.

In April 2021, global meteorological models analysed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee early warning and risk analysis group indicated a risk of a rainfall deficit in Central America for the following months, with potential high impact on the *primera* season (May–September). This came on top of an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification update in March that showed a dramatic increase in food insecurity due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the 2020 hurricane season. The potential impact of the forecasted drought on food security had been classified as high, especially in the Dry Corridor and in areas with higher levels of migration due to the greater level of population vulnerability. SFERA AA was activated, thanks to the contribution of the Government of Belgium, to anticipate and mitigate the impacts of drought during the *primera* season and to ensure the continuation of agricultural activities in the subsequent *postrera* season. The intervention assisted vulnerable subsistence farmers in **El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras** by increasing water storage and water management capacities, providing animal health support, as well as time-critical and drought-tolerant agricultural inputs.

In the Grand Sud Region of **Madagascar**, three years of consecutive severe drought wiped out harvests and hampered people's access to food, causing a critical acute food insecurity and malnutrition situation. In October 2021, a major outbreak of Malagasy migratory locust was expected to affect the upcoming agricultural

season (November 2020–March 2021), causing severe impacts on the livelihoods, nutrition and food security of approximately 1 million people. The SFERA AA fund was immediately activated, thanks to the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, to prevent the spread of migratory locusts through FAO’s technical, operational and capacity building support for survey and control operations. This was conducted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, particularly the National Locust Control Centre, the Plant Protection Directorate and the Regional Directorates of Agriculture and Livestock. As of January 2022, FAO and partners had surveilled 60 percent of congregation areas, and treated about 3 500 ha of land. These actions were expected to prevent a major disaster: in past locust upsurges, crop losses reached up to 40 percent.

In April 2021, the political crisis in **Myanmar** had already displaced and affected the livelihoods of thousands of vulnerable people, contributing to worrying upward trends in market prices of basic food commodities. Further deterioration in food security was expected over the following months as a result of an expected increase in urban-to-rural migration and related pressures on individual households and locally available resources such as land and water, and the disruption of income sources and banking services, jeopardizing access to agricultural inputs for the upcoming monsoon agricultural season. SFERA AA, thanks to the contribution of the German Federal Foreign Office, was activated to provide timely livelihoods support to vulnerable families, and mitigate impacts on food security and nutrition. The intervention targeted vulnerable households through the provision of agricultural inputs combined with trainings on good agricultural practices.

In **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, the alert level for La Soufrière had been high since the end of 2020. In early 2021, a series of anticipatory actions were conducted in close collaboration with the government to mitigate the potentially devastating impacts of an eruption on agricultural livelihoods. In April 2021, the warning signs proved right and a major explosive eruption occurred. Considering that the risk of further volcanic activity remained high, FAO activated SFERA AA to keep delivering anticipatory actions to protect livestock assets on the northeastern end of the island, which was within the highest ‘red danger’ risk zone. The intervention targeted the most vulnerable livestock farming households with provision of animal shelter and animal health support, as well as technical support to improve tagging and traceability of livestock.

In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, forecasts released in August 2021 pointed to a high likelihood of below-average rainfall in the second half of 2021, coinciding with the wheat planting season in crisis-affected parts of the country. The impact of rainfall deficits on vulnerable wheat farmers was expected to be severe, especially following the widespread failure of the rainfed cereals harvest. The SFERA AA fund – thanks to the contribution of the German Federal Foreign Office – allowed FAO to rapidly procure and distribute drought-tolerant wheat seeds, in time for planting. The action complemented ongoing water source rehabilitation activities in the same areas. It is expected that each targeted household will be able to produce about 2 tonnes of wheat thanks to this timely intervention.

**Table 11. Funding provided under the desert locust programme window**

Resource partner	Type of intervention	USD (000)
<b>Contribution from Ireland</b>		
Kenya	Emergency support to improve surveillance and control of desert locust invasion	597
<b>Contribution from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</b>		
Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Global, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Yemen	Desert locust response to mitigate impacts on food security and livelihoods in Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, West Africa and the Sahel	1 416
<b>Total</b>		<b>2 013</b>

## Desert locust programme window

Under the SFERA desert locust programme window, from the beginning of the campaign, a total of USD 5.1 million were received from the governments of Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Louis Dreyfus Foundation, including a top-up of USD 1.4 million in 2021 from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Major successes have been scored over the past two years to suppress the desert locust upsurge – the worst such crisis in decades – and to mitigate its impacts on vulnerable farmers and herders. This is thanks to the timely and generous support of FAO's 29 resource partners, who funded 100 percent of the appeal for a total of USD 243 million enabling FAO to: (i) provide technical and operational assistance for surveillance and control operations; (ii) provide livelihood support for affected farmers and herders; and (iii) build and sustain the capacity of national and regional actors to cope with similar outbreaks in the future.

Collective efforts by FAO and governments in the affected countries have controlled over 2.3 million ha of land, protected the food security and livelihoods of over 41.5 million people, prevented the loss of over USD 1.77 billion worth of cereals and milk, and developed country and regional capacities through trainings, building airstrips and research centres, procuring an aircraft for the Desert Locust Commission, and introducing and strengthening dozens of new technologies.

At the peak of the response, FAO's global appeal included the greater Horn of Africa and Yemen, West Africa and the Sahel, plus Southwest Asia. The upsurge is now coming to an end, with only a few hotspots in the greater Horn of Africa remaining, that require continued surveillance. FAO was enabled to strengthen and expedite its overall response to the desert locust crisis thanks to funds contributed by the SFERA desert locust programme window.





# Conclusions

SFERA provides FAO with a tool for 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 various shock categories, including protracted crises, natural disasters and food chain crises. It enables FAO to be quicker and more flexible in its response and puts the Organization in a position to swiftly upscale its operational capacities at times when needs increase rapidly and exponentially after a disaster. The approach remains focused on results across key priority areas, addressing cross-cutting issues and working with partners.

SFERA interventions identify and integrate the different needs and strengths of women and men, boys and girls. Specific attention is given to ensure that SFERA interventions include supporting female-headed households in emergency response, disseminating technologies and practices that prevent and mitigate disaster impacts, 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.

Through timely advances, catalytic revolving allotments, anticipatory actions and the adoption of a programmatic approach, SFERA accelerated FAO's response capacities leading to strengthening local, regional and national capacities to combat animal and plant pests and diseases, ultimately protecting millions of rural and pastoral households from livelihood loss and distress.

Finally, this year the SFERA AA window further strengthened FAO's role in leading global efforts in testing and upscaling Anticipatory Action approaches to prevent food crises. Anticipating the deterioration of food security is critical to protect livelihoods and people's means to sustain themselves, and their food security. Anticipatory actions are also cost-effective: evidence built over the past years shows 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.







**Saving livelihoods saves lives**

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