

OCHA Evaluation of Country-Based Pooled Funds

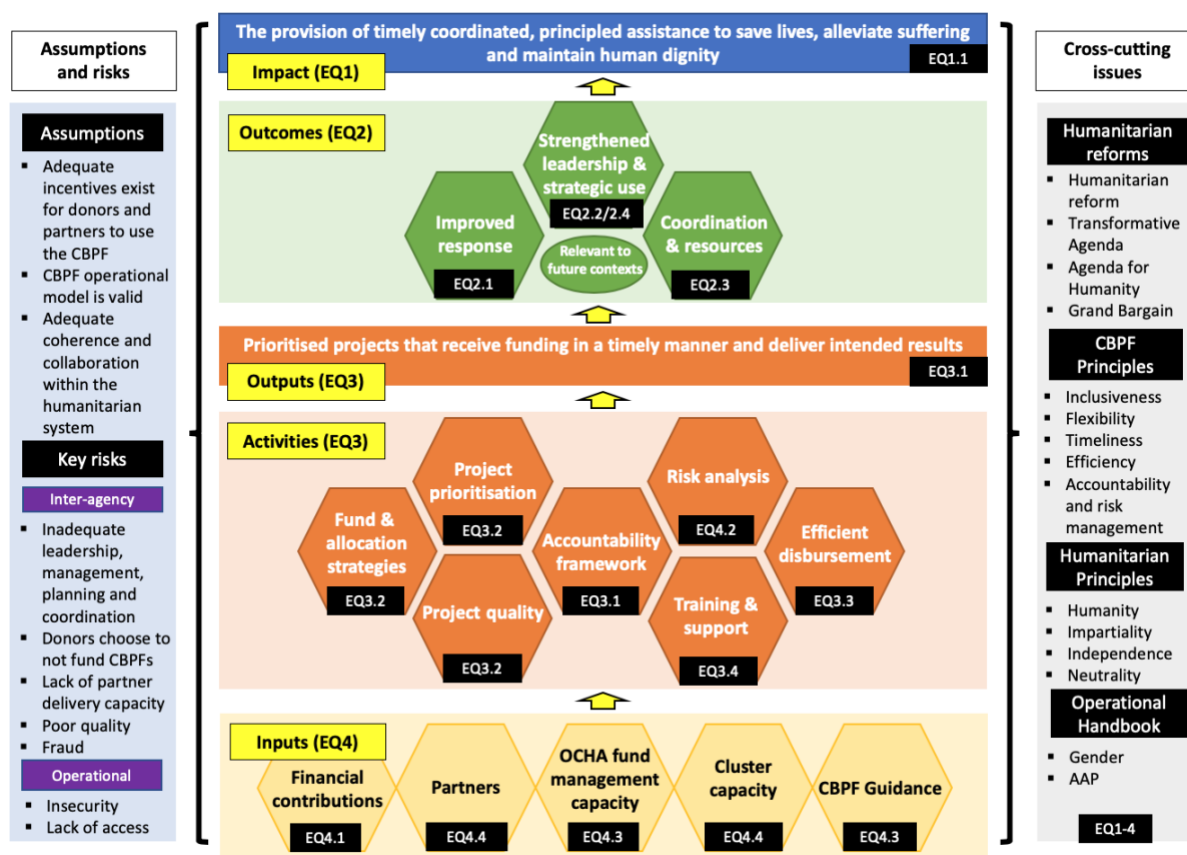
Evaluation update for the IASC Humanitarian Financing Results Group 5, October 2019

Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation assesses how CBPFs have performed against the OCHA CBPF Policy Instruction between 2015 and 2018.

Analytical framework

The evaluation team used an analytical framework to guide and inform the evaluation which is based on the CBPF Operational Impact framework (outlined in the Policy Instruction). The structure of the evaluation case study reports are in line with the framework, as are the conclusions outlined below.



Progress with the evaluation

New York and Geneva HQ consultations, case study visits to CBPFs in Somalia, South Sudan, oPt, Afghanistan, Iraq (executive summaries for country reports attached). Interviews with 550 informants and gender-disaggregated community engagement with 705 men and women in case study countries. Remote interviews with the remaining 13 CBPFs, with a focus on the Yemen, DRC, Ethiopia and Syria cross-border funds.

Initial conclusions from the evaluation (please note that the synthesis report is still being drafted)

Inputs: Is the management of CBPFs fit for purpose and do they operate efficiently?

- The growth in the CBPFs is a reflection of the contribution they have made to strengthening the humanitarian system and meeting Grand Bargain commitments (to reduce earmarking,

harmonize reporting, strengthen delivery of assistance through cash and vouchers and localization in particular).

- CBPFs have only rarely achieved the aspirational target of comprising 15% of HRP funding. They remain largely reliant on traditional donors albeit with greater burden-sharing across these donors.
- The evaluation received consistently positive feedback on risk management, with donors comparing OCHA favorably to other UN agencies. However, this achievement is fragile and risk will increase: (i) as OCHA takes over the MA responsibilities in 4 countries, (ii) if CBPFs continue to grow.
- CBPFs have a symbiotic relationship with the humanitarian aid architecture, contributing to strengthening it but also relying on it to operate effectively.
- CBPFs have diverse Advisory Boards (with representation from local/national NGOs (NNGOs), INGOs, UN agencies) that focus on day-to-day management but could have greater strategic input.
- The capacity of in-country Humanitarian Financing Units (HFU) has improved with time. The CBPF-Section is currently stretched. There are widespread concerns about the timeliness of recruitment and the need to plan for the resource implications of meeting the 15% aspiration. There is also scope to strengthen talent and knowledge management.
- Global guidance been largely fit for purpose and its standardisation has increased transparency and ensured greater consistency in the management and operation of CBPFs. There is a question about whether the guidance is adequate for both small (\$10-12 million) as well as large (\$200+ million) funds. There is a need for additional guidance in some aspects of the CBPFs.
- The evaluation received favourable feedback on the Grant Management System (GMS) which has delivered efficient and transparent grant management and promoted cross-cutting issues. Donors appreciate Business Intelligence portal. There is considerable concern about the risk of a forced move from the GMS to Grantor.
- There was strong support from donors for the harmonisation of the Managing Agent responsibilities. A comparative analysis of the efficiencies of different models for the Administrative Agent (Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office) are still under review.

Activities: To what extent are CBPFs supporting partners to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs in a way that is timely and is consistent with Grand Bargain priorities?

- CBPFs are broadly aligned with HRPs and are also responsive to new needs. They promote inclusive and transparent allocations to priority needs.
- Allocations through siloed cluster system can be a barrier to multi-sector programming which is more relevant to community needs. This is a humanitarian system issue rather than being specific to the CBPFs.
- CBPFs are seen as successful in shaping the humanitarian system and so have been called upon to promote a growing range of cross-cutting issues but this requires greater expertise across the wider system to improve implementation.
- Timeliness has improved over evaluation period and CBPFs are considered to be faster than many other donors but there is a trade-off between speed and quality programming.
- Questions about the relevance of short project timeframes in protracted crises.
- CBPFs have achieved a balance between significantly increasing funding to NNGOs while maintaining focus on funding best-placed partners. However, practice does vary considerably between funds and there is scope to strengthen guidance in this area.
- Funds have also promoted localization through greater NNGO representation in decision-making fora and some capacity strengthening but there is a lack of clarity about OCHA's mandate/role in this.

Outcomes and 'operational impact': To what extent and in what ways do CBPFs strengthen coordination, leadership and response?

- CBPFs help to strengthen cluster coordination (including by funding it in some cases) and collaboration between different actors.
- HCs value CBPFs for strengthening their leadership. However, HCs have sometimes made decisions which donors or ABs disagreed or which were not considered transparent.
- CBPF performance also relies on leadership. When there are capable HCs, OCHA HoOs, fund managers and cluster coordinators in place, CBPFs perform well. A weakness in one entity affects the performance of the whole fund. Personalities and leadership styles can have significant influence.
- There is a lack of systematic complementarity between CBPF & CERF despite the existence of good practice.
- HC/RCS have limited information about/scope to influence development funding, which restricts their ability to use CBPFs strategically. Outside of humanitarian assistance, aid architecture is often only partially developed.
- CBPFs have contributed to providing timely, coordinated and principled assistance (humanity and impartiality in particular).
- Anecdotal/secondary evidence show they have contributed to saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining dignity, though these outcomes are harder to evidence and measure as the humanitarian system generates very little outcome and impact-level data. Donors are looking to CBPFs to provide this, in the absence of reporting from other partners.
- HCs and partners have used CBPFs to fill gaps and provide life-saving assistance. CBPFs have improved response to a variety of types of crises (slow onset, rapid onset etc.).
- In terms of the contribution that CBPFs make to response, recipients of CBPF-funded assistance were generally positive about its timeliness and relevance to meeting needs. However, community discussions in the case studies highlighted that that women frequently do not participate in programme assessment and design and have least awareness of means to feedback or complain.

To what extent are CBPFs likely to remain relevant for future humanitarian contexts?

- CBPFs are highly adaptable, responding to donor priorities and the GB commitments. They can also adapt to different contexts. This keeps them relevant and has also strengthened support across a range of stakeholders.
- Due to lack of progress in reforming broader aid architecture, successful funds have come under pressure to stretch to funding preparedness and resilience. There is a general agreement that CBPFs should remain focused on humanitarian response. However, some funds have financed early action and preparedness as part of improving humanitarian response.
- Seen as system changers, CBPFs have promoted relevant programme models such as integrated programming and promotion of cash/vouchers.
- Overall, while there is always room for improvement, CBPFs play a catalytic role. The broader humanitarian system needs to make progress if opportunities that CBPFs present are to be maximized (breaking down silos, articulating outcomes, funding resilience).

Key deliverables

18 October 2019 - submission of draft evaluation report

Early-December 2019 – submission of final evaluation report (dependent on timely feedback)