



# COUNTRY-BASED POOLED FUNDS – A REALITY CHECK

STUDY REPORT

Submitted by Dominik Koepl



# Country-based pooled funds – a reality check

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Caritas Germany, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, The Johanniter International Assistance, Malteser International or Deutsche Welthungerhilfe.

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# Acronyms

<b>GFFO</b>	German Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt)
<b>CA</b>	Capacity Assessment
<b>CBPF</b>	Country-Based Pooled Fund
<b>CHF</b>	Common Humanitarian Funds
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>DACH</b>	Germany, Austria, Switzerland
<b>DD</b>	Due Diligence
<b>FTS</b>	Financial Tracking Service
<b>GMS</b>	Grant Management System
<b>HC</b>	Humanitarian Coordinator
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HFU</b>	Humanitarian Financing Unit
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NNGO</b>	National Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SDR</b>	Secondary Data Review
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VENRO</b>	Verband für Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe (Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs)
<b>WG</b>	Working Group

# Executive Summary

## » Background

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)<sup>1</sup> arose out of the 2005 Humanitarian Reform agenda, which focused on improving the international community's ability to implement more effective and timely humanitarian responses.

CBPFs enable donors to pool their contributions into single, unearmarked funds which are used to support humanitarian efforts in particular countries. The aim is to enable humanitarian partners in crisis-affected countries to deliver timely, coordinated and principled assistance. CBPFs are managed by OCHA under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and in consultation with the humanitarian community. CBPF funding is available, via a structured and open allocation process, to UN agencies and to international and national non-governmental organizations (INGOs and NNGOs).

This study, "Country Based Pooled Funds – A Reality Check", is a collaborative effort of Caritas Germany, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, The Johanniter International Assistance, Malteser International and the Deutsche Welthungerhilfe. It aims to provide an assessment of how German INGOs and their local partners have been able to access Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and the obstacles which limit their access, to describe best practices, and to offer recommendations.

The research consists of three inter-linked components combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection: a review of documentation and data relating to CBPFs; a short online survey to collect information about the knowledge, experience and challenges related to CBPFs; and more detailed interviews with key informants in selected countries in order to collect more in-depth information on challenges and lessons learned by German INGOs and their local partners in applying and implementing CBPF-funded projects.

Study planning, data collection, analysis and reporting were conducted between September and December 2018.

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1 The study focuses exclusively on CBPFs managed by OCHA and accessible to NGOs (see Annex V. List of countries with CBPFs for a list). For an overview of other CBPFs, see NRC (2017).



## Findings

### General

Since their inception, Country-Based Pooled Funds have grown rapidly: In 2017, CBPFs in 18 countries allocated \$ 700m to humanitarian projects. This compares with \$ 20m in one country in 2010. Since 2010, CBPFs have allocated almost \$ 3bn to humanitarian projects. At the same time, Germany's contributions to CBPFs increased from \$ 20m in 2014 to more than \$ 200m in 2017. In this same year, 2017, around 44 % of CBPF funding was allocated to INGOs, 31 % to UN agencies and 23 % to NNGOs. A few UN agencies and large INGOs generally receive disproportionate shares of the total funding. To date, German INGOs and their local partners have only received small allocations.

Around half of the respondents to the online survey stated that their office had previously applied for CBPF funding in their particular country. German INGOs were less likely than their local partners to have applied (directly) for CBPF funding in the past. The data shows a positive trend with a growing number of applications in recent years. Eight out of ten respondents who have applied for CBPF funding in the past received funding. Respondents named various positive factors as reasons for applying for CBPF funding: an additional source of programme funding; the coverage of NGOs' overhead/management costs; the clear processes of CBPFs; the due diligence and capacity assessment and the capacity building aspect of CBPF funding. In line with the high share of organizations which had already applied for (and received) funding, and the positive trend of applications, around half the respondents and three out of four local partners see it as very likely that their organization will apply for CBPF funding in their particular country in the future. Previous experience with CBPF applications substantially increases the likelihood of future applications.

### Obstacles: Access

Six out of ten respondents amongst German INGOs reported never having applied for CBPF funding in the past compared with three out of ten respondents amongst local partners. The reasons for not applying for CBPF funding are varied. The main obstacle to applying for CBPF funding mentioned by German INGOs is donor preference. Respondents highlighted the traditional focus and investment of their organizations in bilateral funding and the perceived advantages of bilateral donors over CBPFs as regards size, duration and flexibility of grants. At the same time, respondents indicated their interest in diversifying funding sources in the future; they consider that CBPFs could be a potentially important component in this strategy. Another major obstacle to applying for CBPF funding, mentioned by respondents from German INGOs, is: a lack of information on CBPFs, due to limited technical capacity and experience of CBPF funding in their organizations' headquarters and country offices; and limited participation in country level coordination structures, through which information on CBPF allocations is disseminated. Involvement in cluster coordination and familiarity with CBPFs is substantially higher amongst respondents from organizations which have previously applied to CBPFs compared with respondents from organizations which have never applied. Two additional obstacles to applying for CBPF funding, mentioned by respondents from German INGOs, are: a lack of capacity at country level; and the partnership model. According to respondents, the majority of German INGOs implement programmes through local partners and therefore have few staff in the country. At the same time, country-level staff often have limited technical experience of CBPF processes and proposal development. Respondents from local partners report facing capacity constraints, not only as regards participating in clusters, but also in relation to monitoring and reporting, finance and administration, compliance and the technical aspects of programming. Some respondents were also not eligible to apply for CBPF funding, due to not being registered in the country or not having completed the due diligence and capacity assessment required by OCHA. Other respondents also did not apply due to insufficient time available for proposal development and the geographic prioritization of CBPFs (see below: Obstacles: Application).

## **Obstacles: Application**

According to the online survey, a majority of respondents from German INGOs and their local partners did not encounter any obstacles when they last applied for CBPF funding. However, some respondents noted challenges due to the limited time available for proposal development and the amount of time required for the allocation process: A majority of respondents was dissatisfied with the time available for CBPF proposal development. While applicants usually have around 14 calendar days to prepare proposals, this varies from country to country and timescales can be shorter. At the same time, respondents also noted that the CBPF process can take several months. While the average CBPF process takes 60 days, it can be as short as 21 and as long as 95 days. Most respondents valued the guidance contained in the CBPF allocation strategy documents when drafting their individual project proposals. However, publicly available allocation strategies vary widely in content and scope and some do not meet the minimum requirements laid out in the global guidance.

Respondents were largely satisfied with the geographic and programmatic focus of the CBPF allocation strategy documents, although the focus of some CBPFs on hard-to-reach and insecure areas constituted a challenge for some organizations. Key informants also noted that the grant sizes allocated by CBPF are often too small and project durations too short: According to respondents, CBPF allocations are too small for establishing a new project and are only cost-effective in the case of existing programmes or through cross-subsidizing CBPF projects with other funds. The project duration is considered too short, especially in the context of protracted crises.

Most respondents were satisfied with the transparency of CBPF allocation processes and decision-making (i.e. selection of funded projects). However, many respondents and key informants noted instances of non-transparent decision-making processes and power imbalances in advisory boards and clusters between the UN and large INGOs on the one hand and small INGOs and local partners on the other hand and that UN agencies and larger INGOs have an advantage over smaller INGOs and especially NNGOs in accessing CBPF funding. These perceptions seem to be exacerbated by communication challenges: Key informants frequently mentioned a lack of or delayed communication and/or feedback from OCHA regarding CBPF allocations.

## **Obstacles: Implementation**

According to the online survey, most respondents from German INGOs and their local partners did not encounter any obstacles during their last implementation of a CBPF-funded project. A minority of respondents reported challenges related to the delayed disbursement of funds (especially the final payment). This proves especially challenging for local partners. A minority of respondents also reported challenges as regards obtaining approval for no-cost extensions or the termination of projects in protracted crises, when projects close despite a need for continuation. Again, key informants frequently mentioned challenges where communication is concerned, e. g. a lack of feedback from OCHA, delayed feedback, a lot of communication back and forth, or a combination of these.

## » Recommendations

Drawing upon the obstacles hindering access to CBPF funds which were reported by respondents from German INGOs and their local partners, a number of recommendations and best practice were identified. In line with the objectives of the study, the majority of recommendations are intended for German INGOs and local partners interested in applying to CBPFs. Some recommendations to OCHA, clusters and donors on recurring challenges are also included.

### Headquarters of German INGOs and local partners

- Organizations should conduct, alone and/or together with potential partners, an internal analysis, and develop a strategy describing whether and, if so, how they want to engage with CBPF funding in the future, taking into account their specific capacities;
- On the basis of the premise that organizations are planning to apply for CBPF funding, they should conduct, jointly with their partner(s), an internal analysis of the steps and resources which are required at the relevant level to allow for application for CBPF funding on the ground. This could include: establishing additional technical capacity on CBPF funds at HQ level; sharing information regarding CBPFs and the possibility of applying for funding at the country level together with COs, partners or in relevant partner networks; providing COs and partners with additional capacity for making CBPF applications, which could include additional HR capacity, capacity strengthening, or surge support during proposal development periods;
- Regardless of any decision regarding an application for CBPF funding, organizations should envisage more engagement in CBPF policy discussions through engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;
- Organizations should advocate stronger representation of national/local NGOs in platforms related to coordination in general and to CBPFs in particular; INGOs should raise local and national partners' challenges, obstacles and recommendations at fora in which NNGOs are not adequately represented.

### Country offices of German INGOs and local partners

- On the basis of the premise that organizations are planning to apply for CBPF funding, COs need to familiarize themselves with the country's CBPF process, because each country adapts the process to its context. COs should approach and engage with OCHA HFU, their cluster(s) and German INGO and NNGO partners with previous CBPF experience;
- Active cluster participation was highlighted by respondents as the single most important pre-requisite for successful CBPF applications. In this context, COs should ensure active participation in cluster coordination and ideally in cluster management, e. g. as cluster co-lead or regional cluster lead, or as a member of a strategic advisory group (SAG), working group or CBPF review committee. Where necessary and possible, organizations should ensure mutual advocacy and support for partners to participate at the relevant levels of coordination. Through participation in clusters, organizations can provide input and influence the programmatic and geographic prioritization of the CBPF allocation strategy;
- On the programme development side, COs with capacity constraints (e. g. lack of access, technical capacity, etc.) should collaborate with partners with a complementary profile.

## OCHA and clusters

- OCHA should consider strengthening their communication and information management: At the global level, the establishment of a single repository for documents relating to CBPF, including the definition of minimum requirements for available documents (i.e. manual, allocation strategy, etc.) would facilitate the access of organizations to CBPF-related information. At the country level, the sharing of timelines for upcoming CBPF allocations well in advance with all stakeholders would allow partners to prepare and plan ahead. Improved communication regarding decision-making and the prioritization process, and improved feedback on proposals, especially those which are rejected, would improve partner satisfaction and counter the perception of biased decision-making. And the submission of concept notes rather than full proposals would decrease time pressure and the burden of proposal development costs;
- As with OCHA, clusters should strive to ensure transparent communication and decision-making in the CBPF process. Clusters should ensure regular turnover and varied representation of cluster partners in review committees to prevent perceptions of biased decision-making. And they should consider allowing cluster partners to participate in review committees only if they have not submitted funding proposals themselves, in order to prevent perceptions of strategic (down)scoring of competing projects;
- OCHA should continue to streamline the CBPF process without restricting the inclusiveness of the process. The introduction of a global CA or proxy CA (as preferred CA option) and unified reporting in line with the Grand Bargain would lower the entry threshold and the administrative burden faced by partners;
- OCHA should continue to provide support, to local and national partners in particular, for strengthening capacity for making successful applications to CBPF, based on experience and lessons learned in different countries with CBPFs.

## Donors

- The study found a generally high level of satisfaction amongst respondents with their countries' CBPFs. In this context, donors should aim to reach the 15 % target of HRP funding channeled through CBPFs made at the World Humanitarian Summit. This could be achieved through increasing their own contributions and also through advocacy amongst potential new donors;
- Recognizing that CBPFs are not a panacea where the funding of humanitarian aid is concerned and are not suitable for all partners and in all contexts, donors should keep multiple channels for funding open: direct/bilateral, via UN agencies, via Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and via innovative funding alternatives;
- As part of their involvement in the Pooled Fund Working Group, donors should advocate continued streamlining of the CBPF process without restricting its inclusiveness. Advocacy and introduction of a global CA or proxy CA (as preferred CA option) and unified reporting in line with the Grand Bargain would lower the entry threshold and the administrative burden faced by partners;
- Donors should continue to advocate increased and more active inclusion of local and national organizations in the relevant global and national CBPF steering mechanisms;
- Donors should continue to support capacity strengthening initiatives for organizations, local and national organizations in particular, which are planning to apply for CBPF funding.

# I. Introduction

## » Background

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) have become an increasingly important humanitarian funding source and stakeholder in recent years. During this time the number of CBPFs, the amount of money allocated through them for humanitarian responses, and the number of contributing donors has increased substantially. In the context of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain, CBPFs are seen as an important component of localization and action towards the goal of allocating increasing amounts of humanitarian funds to NNGOs.

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) arose out of the 2005 Humanitarian Reform agenda, which focused on improving the international community's ability to implement more effective and timely humanitarian responses. One of the three key reform objectives focused on funding and specifically the need to ensure that funding for emergency response is timely, flexible and predictable.

CBPFs allow donors to pool their contributions in single, unearmarked funds to be used to support humanitarian efforts in the particular countries which have CBPFs. The aim is to enable humanitarian partners in crisis-affected countries to deliver timely, coordinated and principled assistance. The objectives of CBPFs are to direct funding towards priority humanitarian needs, strengthen the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), and mobilize resources in support of the HRP.

CBPFs are established when a new emergency occurs or when an existing crisis situation deteriorates<sup>2</sup>. They are managed by OCHA under the leadership of the HC and in consultation with the humanitarian community. According to OCHA the funds aim to support the highest-priority projects of the best-placed responders. CBPF funding is available via a structured and open allocation process to UN agencies and also to international and national non-governmental organizations (INGOs and NNGOs). CBPFs are expected to make two standard allocations (based on the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) or its equivalent) per year. For many donors, Country-Based Pooled Funds provide a way of funding local and national actors and projects in hard-to-access and insecure locations which might not otherwise be eligible for direct funding by the donors. Allocating funds through existing coordination structures and funding systems, allows donors to ensure compliance without necessitating in-country presence and thus reduces administrative and management costs.

For Germany, the Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) actively supports the strengthening of CBPFs through involvement in policy development and with funding contributions. Since 2009, the GFFO has participated as an observer in the central donor body for the management of humanitarian funds, the Pooled Fund Working Group. The GFFO will chair the Pooled Fund Working Group from December 2018.

In line with the increased significance of CBPFs and GFFO contributions, the interest of German INGOs in accessing CBPF funding has increased. Within VENRO and other fora, there is intensive discussion of the approaches, process, benefits and challenges of CBPF allocations and the perception that the access of German INGOs and their local partners to CBPF funding is currently limited.

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2 OCHA (2017): The decision to establish a CBPF is based on the following criteria: i. Existence of HRP or similar humanitarian planning framework; ii. Indication of donor commitment; iii. Sufficient support structures and capacity of OCHA and clusters at country level to manage a CBPF; and iv. Presence of, and buy-in from, potential partners in-country with capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance.

## » Study objectives

In the context outlined above, the study aims:

- to provide a summary of the recent development of CBPFs,
- to provide an assessment of the access of German INGOs and their local partners to CBPF allocations and the obstacles which they encounter when seeking access; and
- to make recommendations and outline best practice to German INGOs, their local partners and the donor community as regards improving their access to CBPFs.

The purpose of the research is to provide the German INGOs and local partners participating in the study with recommendations regarding ways in which they can potentially improve their access to CBPF funding. In addition, the report aims to inform the German Federal Foreign Office, OCHA and other relevant actors regarding the perceived challenges faced by (I)NGOs in accessing CBPF funding and implementing CBPF projects, and to provide appropriate recommendations.

The study does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather aims to provide an overview of the specific topic of access to CBPF funding from the perspective of the participating German INGOs and their local partners, to inform further discussion, and to contribute to upcoming studies, especially the NRC study on CBPFs in the context of the Grand Bargain and the global evaluation of OCHA.

## II. Study methodology

### » Methodological approach

The study was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (see: Annex III. Study Methodology) in order to obtain a comprehensive and reliable picture of the access of German INGOs and their local partners to CBPFs. The study is based on a research framework/matrix (see: Annex IV. Research Matrix) which defines the linkages between the objectives of the study, the questions and the methods of data collection. This mixed approach made it possible to combine the individual strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods while at the same time overcoming their individual limitations. The study was based on three inter-linked components: a desk and secondary data review; an online survey; and interviews with key informants. The desk and secondary data review provides a summary of the recent development of CBPFs. The online survey provides summary data and information for all the countries with CBPFs. And the key informant interviews provide in-depth information on obstacles, best practice and recommendations for three countries with CBPFs. Research, data collection and analysis took place between September and December 2018. A more detailed description of the study methodology can be found in Annex IV.

### » Focus, limitations and data quality

The findings and recommendations of the study are primarily intended for the German INGOs and local partners which participated in the study. The findings and recommendations are not representative and cannot be extrapolated to apply to all German INGOs or NNGOs. Nor does the study aim to provide a full evaluation of the effectiveness or efficiency of CBPFs in terms of achieving their purpose, or whether they are operating in line with the ongoing reforms in the humanitarian aid sector. Upcoming studies by NRC and OCHA aim to address these topics in more detail. However, the study did involve the application of a number of measures, including mixed methods and data triangulation to ensure the reliability and comprehensiveness of its findings. A more detailed description of the study focus, limitations and data quality can be found in Annex IV.

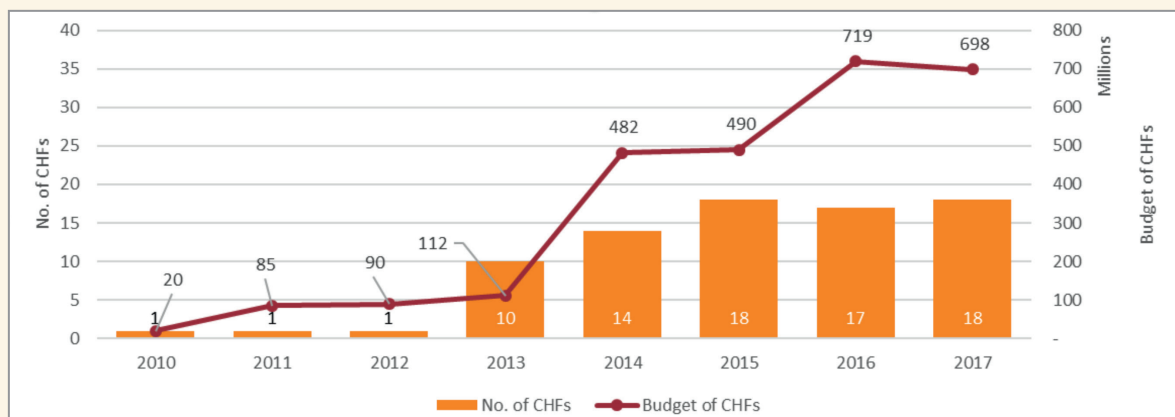
# III. Findings

## General

While OCHA has been managing humanitarian pooled funds at the country level since 1995, CBPFs are rooted in the 2005 Humanitarian Reform, which called for predictable and flexible humanitarian funding to meet the needs of vulnerable communities. Since then, Country-Based Pooled Funds have grown rapidly: While CBPFs allocated only \$ 20m in 2010, the amount allocated reached \$ 100m in 2013 and \$ 500m in 2015. In 2017, CBPFs received a record \$ 833m and funded 1,289 projects implemented by 657 partners in 18 countries. Since 2010, CBPFs have allocated almost \$ 3bn to humanitarian projects. Following the World Humanitarian Summit, the UN Secretary-General called on donors to increase HRP funding channeled through CBPFs to 15 % of total funding. At current levels, this would translate into around \$ 2.9 billion per year.

### Development of CBPFs

The number of CBPFs increased from one in 2010 to 18 in 2017. During this same period the funding allocated through CBPFs increased from \$ 20m in 2010 to almost \$ 700m in 2017.



Source: OCHA Grant Management System

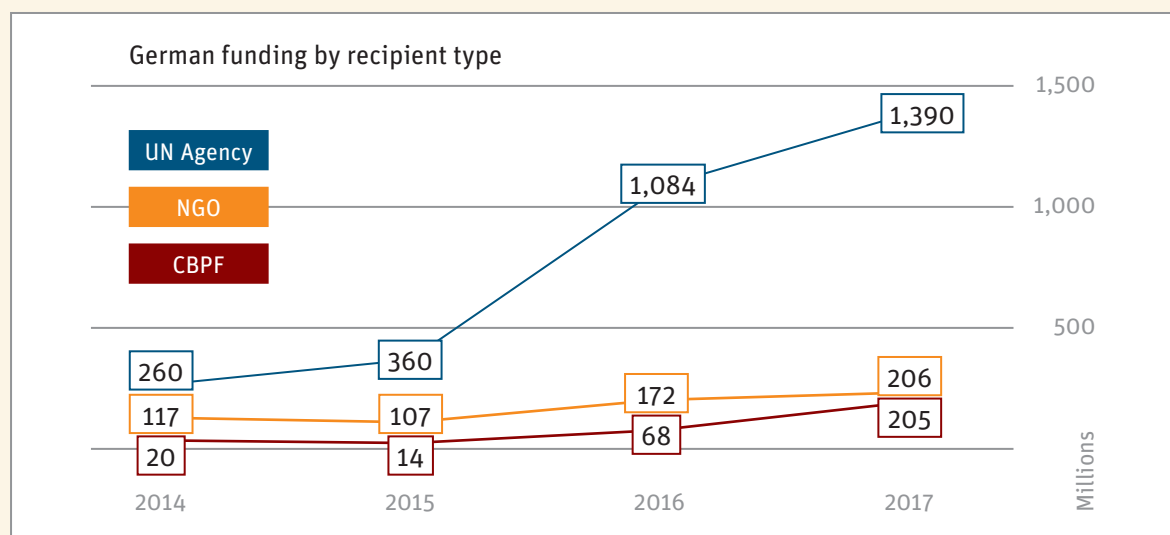
Where Germany is concerned, the Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) actively supports the strengthening of CBPFs through involvement in policy development and by contributing funds. The GFFO actively participates in the Pooled Fund Working Group and will be chairing it from December 2018. In 2017, the GFFO contributed \$ 205m to CBPFs, making it the second-largest contributor after the UK.

According to OCHA's GMS Business Intelligence, Germany's contributions to CBPFs increased from \$ 20m in 2014 to \$ 70m in 2016 and more than \$ 200m in 2017. Germany almost doubled its bilateral funding to NGOs from \$ 120m in 2014 to more than \$ 200m in 2017, i.e. during the same time period. Due to the disproportionately higher increase in contributions to CBPFs, and other organizations and funding mechanisms, the share of GFFO funding allocated to bilateral partners decreased from 28 % in 2014 to 11 % in 2017.



### German humanitarian funding

German humanitarian funding increased rapidly in recent years according to the GFFO: from \$ 420m in 2014 to almost \$ 2bn in 2017. In the past three years contributions to NGOs almost doubled and contributions to Country-Based Pooled Funds grew by a factor of 10.



Source: Germany (2018) and OCHA GMS Business Intelligence

The size of CBPFs varies widely depending on the emergency context, the severity and length/protracted nature of the crisis, the time since establishment, and donor interest. The largest CBPFs since inception are Somalia (\$ 460m), South Sudan (\$ 430m) and Yemen (\$ 400m) and the smallest are Myanmar (\$ 30m), Colombia (\$ 9m) and Haiti (\$ 7m)<sup>3</sup>. During the past two years the largest CBPFs were Yemen (\$ 230m), Ethiopia (\$ 130m) and South Sudan (\$ 115m). The smallest were Lebanon (\$ 12m), Pakistan (\$ 10m) and Colombia (\$ 1m).

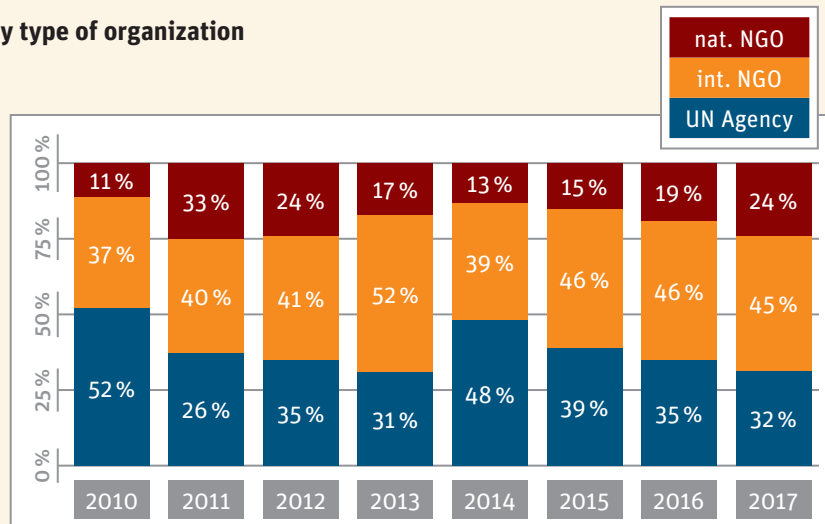
CBPF allocations are prioritized through the cluster/sector system: Primary recipients are Health (19 %), Food Security (17 %), Emergency Shelter and NFI (14 %), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (14 %), Nutrition (11 %), Protection (7 %) and the Education Cluster (5 %). The share of funding across clusters has remained relatively stable over the years.

Around 44 % of CBPF funding goes to INGOs, 37 % to UN agencies and 19 % to NNGOs. There is some variation from year to year, but no discernible trend, e. g. towards more funding for NNGOs and less funding for UN agencies. The largest recipients of CBPF funds are UN agencies: UNICEF has received around \$ 270m since 2010, followed by WFP with \$ 240m, IOM with \$ 150m, WHO with \$ 140m and FAO with \$ 90m. Large INGOs are also recipients of substantial CBPF funding: NRC received around \$ 90m, followed by DRC with \$ 80m, ACTED with \$ 60m, Save the Children with \$ 55m and Oxfam with \$ 50m. Some NNGOs also received significant CBPF funding: three NNGOs received more than \$ 10m and four others received more than \$ 7.5m. German INGOs followed a long way behind: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe received \$ 3m, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe \$ 2.5m, Johanniter Auslandshilfe \$ 2m, Caritas Germany \$ 0.5m and Malteser International \$ 0.3m. The allocation of CBPF funds is generally very concentrated: While more than 800 organizations have received CBPF funds since 2010, the 10 largest organizations received more than a third of all the funds allocated through CBPFs.

<sup>3</sup> The CBPFs in Colombia and Haiti have been closed and are currently not in operation.

### Distribution of CBPF funding by type of organization

CBPF funding is allocated to international NGOs, UN agencies and national NGOs. The distribution of allocations varies over the years: In 2017, international NGOs received 45 % of CBPF funding, followed by UN agencies with 32 % and national NGOs with 24 %. Since 2014, allocations to national NGOs have been increasing, albeit from a low level.

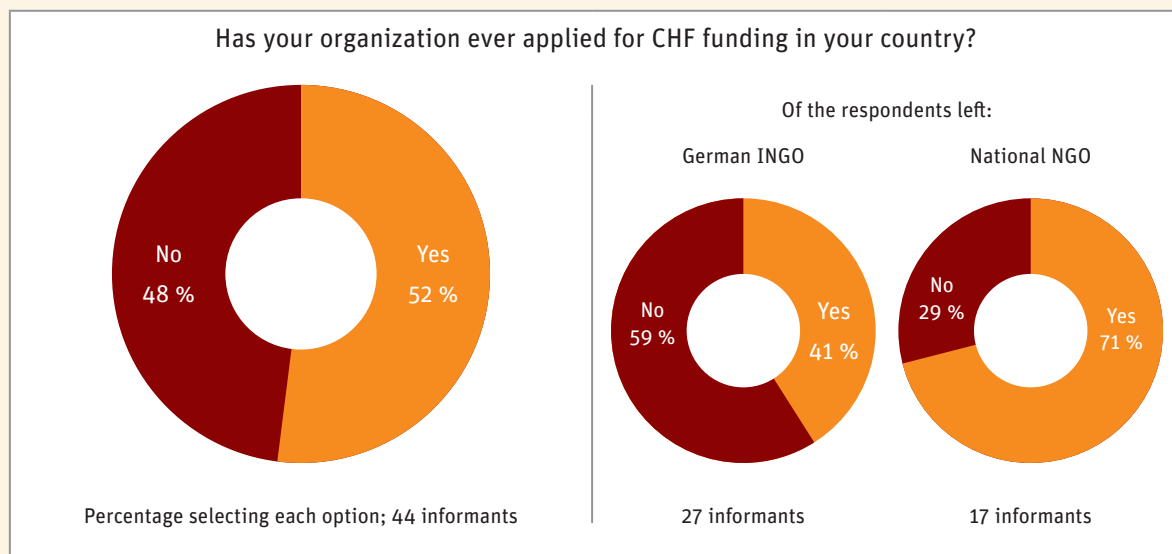


Source: OCHA Grant Management System

Around half (52 %) the respondents to the online survey stated that their office had previously applied for CBPF funding in their particular country. According to respondents, German INGOs were less likely than local partners to have applied (directly) for CBPF funding in the past. 41 % of respondents from German INGOs report having applied for CBPF funding in the past compared with 71 % of respondents from local partners. The key informant interviews confirm this observation. According to their feedback, around 57 % of offices have previously applied for CBPF funding, with a higher proportion of local NGOs having applied for CBPF funding compared with German INGOs. As part of the support they give to their local partners, 26 % of respondents from German INGOs report having supported their local partners in accessing CBPF funding. Respondents of local partners confirm this finding, with 29 % reporting having received support from their German INGO partners.

### CBPF applications

Around half of the respondents state that their office has applied for CBPF funding in their particular country. A majority (71 %) of national NGOs report having applied for CBPF funding in their country, compared with a minority (41 %) of German INGOs.



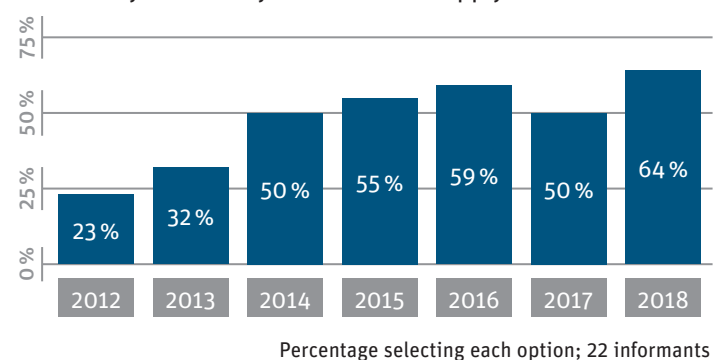
Source: CBPF Online Survey

A comparison of the years, in which organizations which have applied for CBPF funding submitted their proposals, indicates a strong positive trend towards CBPF funding. According to the online survey, nearly a quarter (23 %) of all the organizations which have applied for CBPF funding, applied for CBPF funding in 2012, compared with half (50 %) in 2014 and two thirds (64 %) in 2018. While the share of German INGOs applying for CBPF funding doubled from 20 % to 40 % between 2012 and 2018, the share of local NGOs more than tripled from 25 % to 83 % during the same time period. There seems to have been an especially strong increase between 2013 (25 %) and 2014 (50 %), around the time of renewed debate around localization and increased funding to CBPFs (see above).

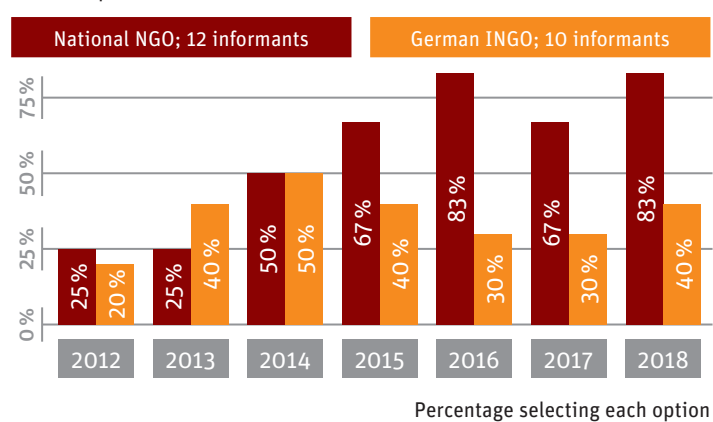
### CBPF applications by year

The number of applications to CBPFs has been increasing over the years: While only one in four respondents state that they made an application to CBPFs in 2012, two in three respondents report having applied to CBPFs in 2018. National NGOs report more frequent applications to CBPFs than German INGOs.

Please select the years, in which your organization has applied for CHF in your country. Select all that apply:



Of the respondents above:



Source: CBPF Online Survey

More than 80 % of the respondents who have applied for CBPF funding at some time in the past, state that they have received CBPF funding at least once. As with the application rate, respondents of local partners report a higher allocation rate than German INGOs: 92 % of respondents from local partners report having received a CBPF allocation in the past compared with 73 % of respondents from German INGOs. As the survey only asked whether the organization had ever received a CBPF allocation, the figure of 92 % does not equate to the probability of receiving a CBPF allocation. However, respondents provided information on the years in which they applied and received CBPF funding. Respondents applied a total of 73 times for CBPF funding and received funding 63 times, equating to an approximate success rate of 86 %. The total number of applications could be higher because multiple applications per year are possible, but this would not necessarily affect the allocation rate as multiple allocations per year are also possible. The key informant interviews confirm these findings. According to key informants, 75 % of the organizations which have applied, also received CBPF funding.

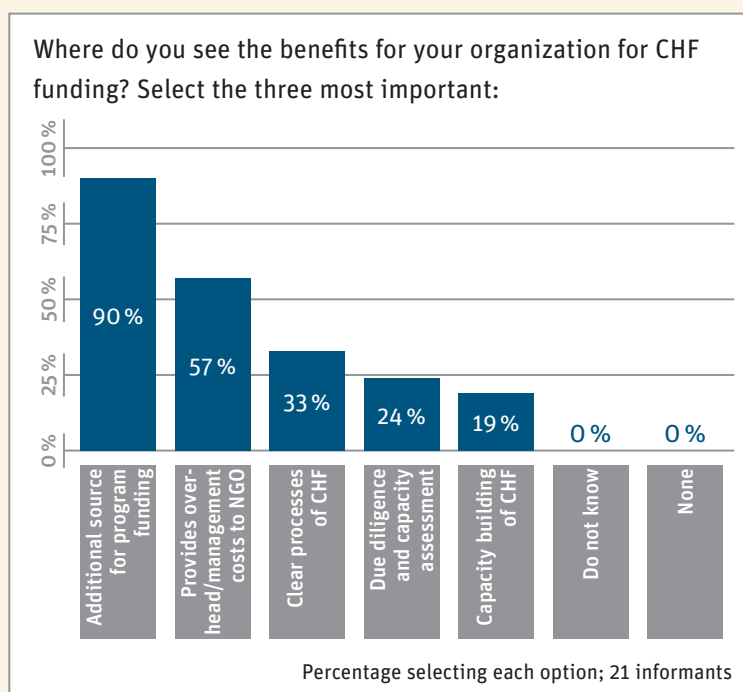
The main reason for respondents applying for CBPF funding is because it is an additional source of programme funding (90 %). Other reasons mentioned include the provision of overhead/management costs to NGOs (57 %), the clear processes of CBPFs (33 %), the due diligence and capacity assessment (24 %), and the capacity building offered in line with the CBPF funding (19 %). For the respondents from local partners, CBPFs are important as a source of programme funding due to challenges in accessing bilateral funding. And for the respondents from German INGOs, CBPFs are important as a means of diversifying funding away from bilateral funding, which is to a large extent contingent on a small number of German bilateral donors. For 75 % of the respondents from local partners (German INGOs: 40 %) the provision of overhead/management costs to NGOs is an important advantage of CBPFs, which distinguishes them from many other donors<sup>4</sup>. Almost half of the local respondents of partners (45 %) also appreciate the clear processes of the CBPF (German INGOs: 20 %). Respondents of German INGOs appreciate the due diligence and capacity assessment because it can also be used for applications to other donors. Respondents of partners which have not yet applied for CBPF funding see the additional source of programme funding as the most important reason for (potentially) applying for CBPF funding in the future, followed by the capacity building aspect of the fund. Partners who were interviewed expressed appreciation of OCHA’s capacity building initiatives, which, according to their feedback<sup>5</sup>, should be maintained and upscaled. These include CBPF clinics, training in project development, budgeting and finance, reporting and monitoring and the GMS system, and may extend to capacity building partnerships between national and international NGOs which pair up a national NGO with an international NGO which mentors the national partner in becoming eligible for CBPF funding (see Twinning Programme).

Key informants also highlighted that CBPF funding tends to be more coordinated than bilateral funding and tends to avoid overlaps in projects.

### Benefits of CBPF applications

Respondents primarily appreciate the funding available through CBPFs. Additional benefits include the provision of funding to cover NGOs’ overhead/management costs, the clear processes of CBPFs, and the due diligence and capacity assessment.

Source: CBPF Online Survey; Note: Three answers possible for these questions; Answers do not add up to 100%.



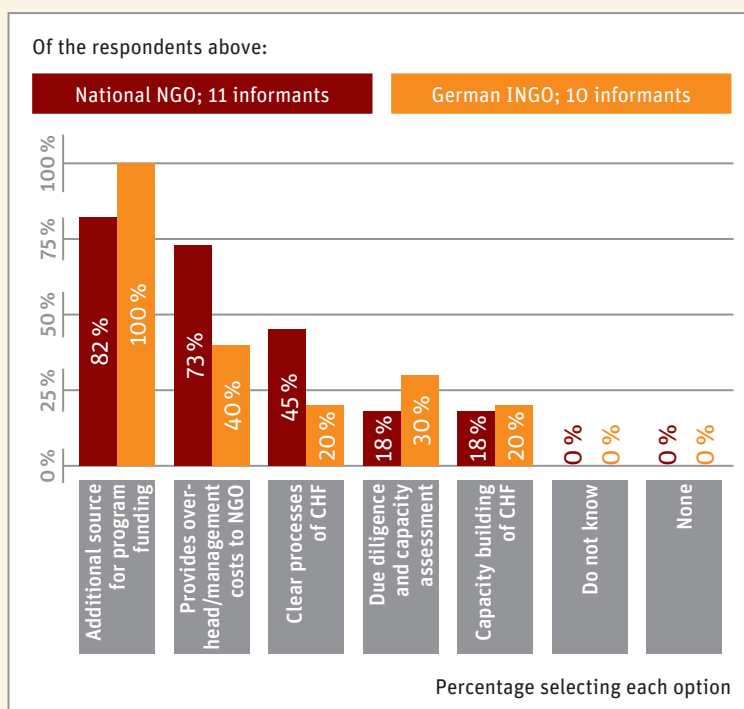
4 See also ICVA (2014) p19

5 See also ICVA (2014) p5 and p23

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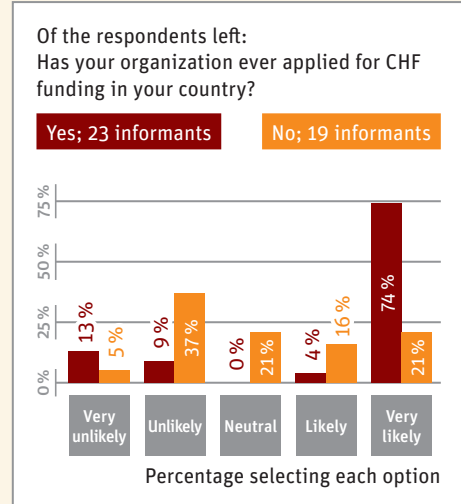
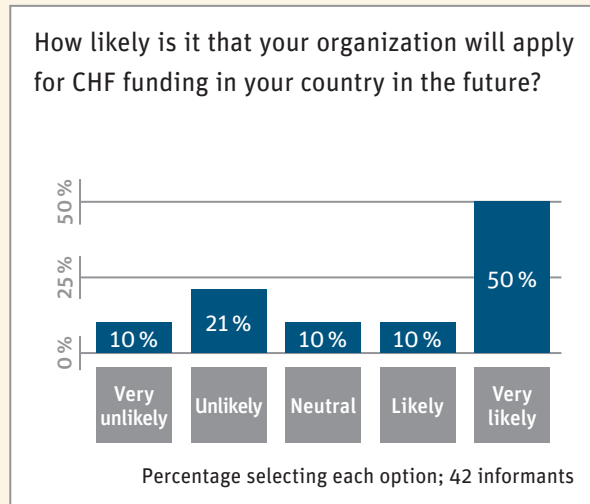
Source: CBPF Online Survey; Note: Three answers possible for these questions; Answers do not add up to 100%.



In line with the high proportion of organizations which had already applied for (and received) CBPF funding and the positive trend in the number of applications, around half (48 %) of the respondents to the online survey stated that it is very likely that their organization will apply for CBPF funding in their particular country. Just as there was a discrepancy between German INGOs and their local partners with regards to applications, 76 % of the respondents from local partners saw it as very likely that their organization will apply for CBPF funding in their particular country, whereas only 30 % of the respondents from German INGOs saw this as likely. While 41 % of the respondents from German INGOs see it as likely or very likely their organization will apply for CBPF funding in their particular country, 44 % see this as unlikely or very unlikely. Previous experience of submitting CBPF applications increases the likelihood of future CBPF applications being submitted from 50 % to 74 %. On the other hand, only 21 % of the respondents of organizations which had never applied for CBPF funding before, saw it as very likely that their organization will apply for CBPF funding in the future. The key informant interviews confirm these findings. According to the key informants, 73 % of organizations see it as likely or very likely that their organization will apply for CBPF funding in the future.

### Likelihood of future CBPF applications

One in two respondents rated the likelihood of applying for CBPF funding in the future as very high. According to the respondents, organizations which have applied for CBPF funding in the past are more likely to apply again than organizations which have not yet applied for CBPF funding. Three out of four respondents who have applied for CBPF funding in the past, rate the likelihood of applying for CBPF funding in the future as very high.



Source: CBPF Online Survey

### Best practice and recommendations

- It is recommended that donors aim to achieve the 15 % target of HRP funding channeled through CBPFs which was agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit. This could be achieved by increasing their own contributions and also by engaging in advocacy amongst potential new donors.

## » Obstacles: Access

Around half (52 %) of the respondents to the online survey stated that their office had previously applied for CBPF funding in their particular country. German INGOs were less likely than local partners to have applied for CBPF funding in the past. 41 % of the respondents from German INGOs reported having applied for CBPF funding in the past compared with 71 % of the respondents from local partners.

The reasons for not applying for CBPF funding are diverse. According to the online survey, the main reason for German INGOs never having applied for CBPF funding is the preference for other funding sources (36 %). Other reasons include: insufficient capacity (29 %), the complexity of CBPF proposal development (21 %), the organization's partnership model (21 %), lack of eligibility to apply (14 %), the timeframe of CBPF applications (14 %), and the geographic prioritization of CBPFs (14 %)<sup>6</sup>. 29 % could not give a reason. According to the online survey, the number of local partners which had never applied for CBPF funding is very limited. Their reasons for not applying are preference for other funding sources (50 %) and lack of eligibility to apply for CBPF funding (50 %). The key informant interviews largely confirm the findings of the online survey. A majority of the respondents mentioned lack of capacity, donor preference and their partnership model as obstacles to applying for CBPF funding.

### Donor preference

The main obstacle to applying for CBPF funding mentioned by respondents from German INGOs is donor preference (36 %)<sup>7</sup>. According to the key informants, German INGOs traditionally rely on a mix of bilateral funding and private donations<sup>8</sup>. In this context, German INGOs have built up structures and capacities and established relationships for collaborating with bilateral and private donors with a strong focus on the German speaking DACH countries. In line with the donor base, proposal development capacities are geared towards bilateral and German speaking donors and centralized in Germany. The centralized structure, with proposal development capacities centred in headquarters rather than COs, is advantageous where the development of bilateral proposals is concerned, but constitutes a disadvantage when applying for country-based funding, e. g. from CBPFs. At the same time, the proposal development process differs significantly between bilateral donors and CBPFs, putting German INGOs with their focus on and capacity in bilateral funding at a disadvantage.

On the one hand, key informants indicated that bilateral funding provides a better relationship between proposal development costs (including chances of approval) and allocation size. Key informants also indicated that bilateral proposals tend to be shorter and more flexible with regards to timing and project design and this is combined with significantly larger allocation sizes compared with CBPF allocations. On the other hand, key informants expressed concern about the dependence on a small number of bilateral funding sources and their uncertain future prospects in the context of possible changes in political priorities. As a consequence, key informants indicated their interest in diversifying funding sources in the future and mentioned CBPFs as a potentially important component in this strategy.

6 Responses do not add up to 100 % as multiple choices were allowed. Respondents were asked to prioritize/provide their three most important choices.

7 See also Quack (2016), p61

8 See also Quack (2016), p20

### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- HQs conduct an internal analysis and – alone or together with potential partners – develop a strategy describing whether and, if so, how they want to engage with CBPF funding in the future, taking into account their specific capacities;
- donors keep multiple channels for funding open – direct, via UN, via Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), and via innovative funding alternatives;

### Information and Cluster engagement

One of the main obstacles to applying for CBPF funding mentioned by the respondents from German INGOs was a lack of information. Country offices should normally receive information on CBPF allocations from two sources: The organization's headquarters informs the country office about the general availability of CBPF funding; and the OCHA HFU and/or clusters inform the humanitarian community about the specifics of current CBPF allocations and the application process.

With capacities having been focused on bilateral donors until now, key informants indicated that there is limited technical capacity and experience in relation to CBPF funds in the organizations' headquarters and applications are often made as part of country offices' or individual colleagues' initiatives.

Receipt of information on CBPF allocations at country level presumes active involvement in country level coordination structures, through which information on CBPF allocations is disseminated. According to the online survey, the German INGOs and their local partners rate their own involvement in coordination structures (i.e. cluster, OCHA, HCT) generally as good (52 %) or excellent (20 %). Only a minority of respondents rates its involvement as average (11 %), fair (11 %) or poor (2 %). Respondents of local partners rate their involvement in coordination more positively than respondents of German INGOs<sup>9</sup>. A comparison of the self-rated involvement in coordination structures for respondents of organizations which have previously applied for CBPF funding with that of respondents of organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding, shows that respondents of organizations which have previously applied rate their involvement more positively than respondents of organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding. 95 % of respondents of organizations which have previously applied for CBPF funding rate their involvement in coordination as excellent (30 %) or good (65 %), while almost half of respondents of organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding rate their involvement in coordination as average or less than average. Almost half of the respondents of organizations which have previously applied for CBPF funding perform at least one coordination function (e. g. cluster co-leadership, HCT, CBPF Strategic/Technical Review, CBPF Advisory Board) compared with 6 % of respondents of organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding. So the CBPFs seem to be successful in fulfilling their objective of strengthening existing coordination structures<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See also Weingärtner et al. (2011) p59f and Quack (2016) p54

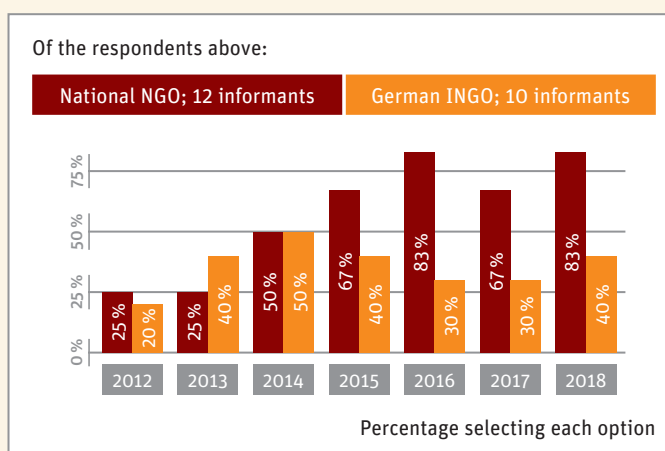
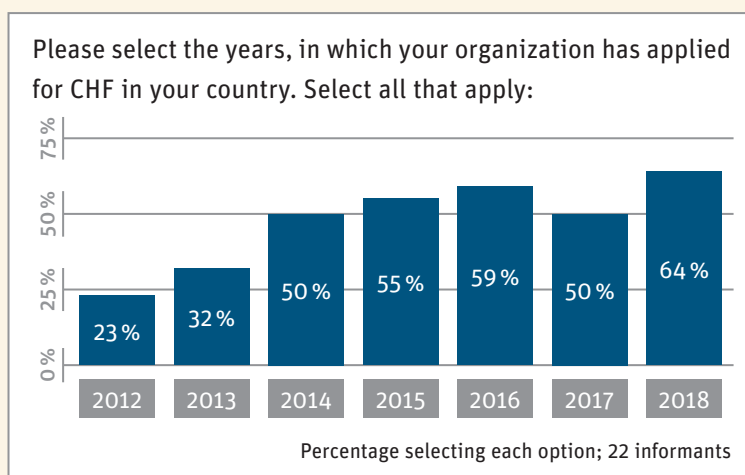
<sup>10</sup> See also ICVA (2014) p14



### Involvement in cluster coordination

According to respondents, most organizations do not play an active role in cluster coordination. Only a minority co-leads a cluster, is a member of the HCT or participates in CBPF review committees or advisory boards. Organizations which have previously applied to CBPFs are much more likely than organizations which have not previously applied to CBPFs to be actively involved in cluster management.

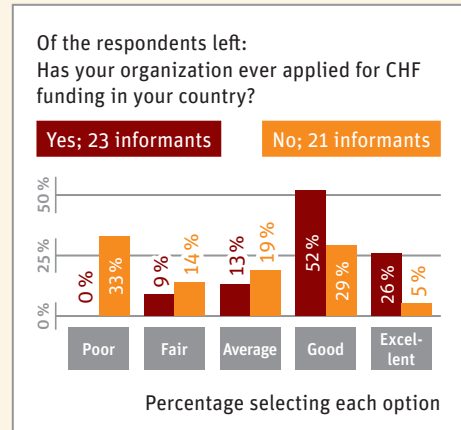
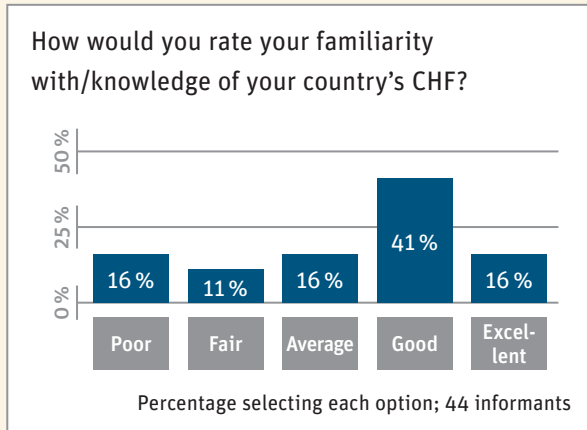
Source: CBPF Online Survey; Note: Multiple answers possible for these questions; Answers do not add up to 100%.



A similar picture emerges of the familiarity/knowledge which respondents have of their respective CBPFs. According to the online survey, the German INGOs and their local partners rate their familiarity with/knowledge of their country's CBPF generally as good (42 %) or excellent (16 %). Only a minority of respondents rated their familiarity as average (16 %) or fair (11 %). However, 16 % rate their knowledge of their country's CBPF as poor. As in the case of involvement in clusters (unsurprisingly), the knowledge of CBPFs is higher for respondents from organizations which have previously applied to CBPFs compared with respondents from organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding before. Almost half of the respondents from organizations which have never applied for CBPF funding rate their knowledge/familiarity with their CBPF as fair (14 %) or poor (33 %). In line with application rates, respondents of local partners are more familiar with CBPFs than German INGOs.

### Familiarity with and knowledge of CBPFs

A majority of respondents of organizations rate their own familiarity with and knowledge of CBPFs as good or excellent. Respondents of organizations which have previously applied for CBPF funding rate their familiarity with and knowledge of CBPFs better than respondents of organizations which have not previously applied for CBPFs.



Source: CBPF Online Survey

At the same time, the desk review indicated that the scope and methods of information sharing vary widely between individual CBPFs. Retrieval and review of allocation strategies for standard allocations in 2017 and 2018 indicate that: no single repository exists for the publication of allocation strategies; not all allocation strategies are published; and there is wide variation in the content and scope of allocation strategies. Depending on the country, allocation strategies may be published on OCHA websites, HumanitarianResponse.info, Reliefweb, dedicated CBPF websites, or in some cases on cluster document repositories. According to CBPF annual reports, allocation strategies for only half of the 30 standard allocations in 2017 are accessible on the internet. That said, 12 allocation strategies for 17 CBPF countries are accessible for the first standard allocation in 2018, indicating that there has been an improvement in online information sharing since the previous year.

Key informants note that information sharing and communication by OCHA and clusters could be improved, and could be timelier and more pro-active. Key informants also mention cases of inconsistent communication coming from OCHA and clusters.

## Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- HQs: improve the provision of information to COs regarding CBPFs and the possibility of applying for funding at country level; encourage and provide incentives to COs to apply to country-based funding sources; provide strategic instruction to COs to prioritize applications to CBPFs; provide strengthened capacity as required (see below);
- COs and local partners strengthen their participation in coordination (with NGO fora, donors, INGOs, NNGOs, etc.) in general and in cluster coordination in particular<sup>11</sup>. Active participation in a cluster (e. g. as co-lead or regional lead, or through participation in an SAG or a working group) was highlighted as the single most important pre-requisite for the success of CBPF applications<sup>12</sup>. Involvement in a cluster ensures the timely receipt of information on upcoming allocations, facilitates participation in decision-making processes (e. g. prioritization of programmatic activities and geographic areas); and improves visibility and reputation (see below). Participation in CBPF Review Committees strengthens CBPF capacity. Communication, advocacy, visibility and reputation are important factors contributing to the success of CBPF applications. Where necessary and possible, organizations should engage in joint advocacy and ensure mutual support for partners' participation at the relevant levels of coordination. The target audiences are OCHA HFU, clusters and cluster partners, and other CBPF stakeholders. Another path worth considering is programmatic or geographic specialization;
- HQs and COs advocate – and OCHA facilitates – stronger representation of relevant national/local NGOs in platforms related to coordination in general and to CBPFs in particular; HQs and COs raise the challenges and obstacles encountered by local and national partners and make appropriate recommendations at fora where NNGOs are not adequately represented;
- OCHA and COs support national NGOs in participating in key coordination and decision-making fora and exercises, including humanitarian country teams, cluster coordination, pooled fund advisory groups, coordinated needs assessments and HRP development, thereby promoting stronger partnerships and increased direct access to humanitarian funding for local NGOs and national NGOs engaged in front-line response<sup>13</sup>.
- donors continue to advocate increased and more active inclusion of local and national organizations in the relevant global and national CBPF steering mechanisms;
- OCHA HFU establish a single data repository for documents relating to CBPF and define minimum requirements for documents (e. g. manuals, allocation strategies, etc.)<sup>14</sup>.

11 See also Germany (2014) p6

12 See also OCHA (2015) p25

13 See also Caritas (2014) p6

14 See also ICVA (2014) p20

### Capacity and partnership model

Another obstacle to applying for CBPF funding mentioned by respondents from German INGOs is the combination of a lack of capacity at country level (29 %) with the partnership model (21 %). According to key informants, applying for CBPF funding requires staff who not only develop funding proposals, but also coordinate with stakeholders, including OCHA, clusters and partners. During the short time allocated for proposal development (usually around two weeks), a substantial additional workload is concentrated in a short period of time. At the same time, and because CBPFs aim to encourage strengthening of the coordination system, continuous presence and participation in coordination fora is encouraged and increases the chances of CBPF applications being successful (see above). For these reasons and due to the local nature of CBPFs and the strong emphasis on coordination, remote development of proposals reduces the chances of projects being approved.

According to the online survey, a majority of German INGOs implement programmes with local partners (70 %) and only a minority (11 %) implement programmes directly. The remainder (19 %) implement programmes through a combination of partnerships and direct implementation. The practical implementation of these partnerships differs depending on the organization. Some organizations provide remote support to local partners without actually having staff in the country. Others have a small office providing on-site support. And there are also hybrid forms of partnership and direct implementation. In-country staffing levels of German INGOs therefore differ widely, from 0 to 30 with an average of 6. According to the online survey, organizations which operate exclusively through partnerships tend to be smaller if they have never applied for CBPF funding. Such organizations have between 0 and 8 in-country staff with an average of 2.4, whereas organizations which have previously applied for CBPF funding have between 2 and 30 in-country staff with an average of 10.9. Thus, there seems to be a minimum level of (in-country) staffing required for applying for CBPF funding. That said, apart from the minimum staffing level, the partnership model does not (in most countries) per se preclude applications for CBPF funding. According to the online survey, 64 % of the German INGOs which applied for CBPF funding operate exclusively through partnerships. Secondary data shows that every fifth project is implemented by a partner. Again, there is substantial variation between countries: While in some countries (CAR, Myanmar, OPT, Sudan and Yemen) every third project is implemented in partnership, other countries prefer direct implementation and discourage or explicitly exclude partnerships (Pakistan, South Sudan)<sup>15</sup>. UN agencies are the most likely to work in partnerships (36 %), followed by INGOs (22 %) and NNGOs (11 %).

Some key informants from German INGOs also noted organizations' focus on – and capacity in – development rather than humanitarian programming. This makes it more difficult to apply successfully for CBPF funding. Respondents from local partners report facing capacity constraints in the context of monitoring and reporting, finance and administration, compliance and technical aspects of programming. Key informants regularly mentioned challenges in proposal development and especially proposal writing and less often challenges in meeting the requirements for CBPF eligibility.

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15 According to OCHA key informants, the restriction of CBPF allocations to organizations implementing projects directly was explicitly requested by the CBPF Advisory Board and might be revisited in the future.

	Models of partnership and forms of cooperation	Explanation
<p><b>Partnership: Strengthening local actors and pooled funds</b></p> <p>In this report, the terms of partnership and local actors are used on multiple occasions, as they are key terms for the scope of the study, but also key terms in the ongoing policy debate on CBPF and pooled funds more generally. There are considerable differences in terms of usage and meaning in the relevant secondary literature, but also in what has been said during the direct interviews.</p> <p>This becomes particularly evident when comparing the nature of partnerships between for example UNICEF and a local NGO, and Caritas Germany and a catholic diocese. Both can be called partnerships, both are done to provide humanitarian assistance and protection, but both are fundamentally different in their scope, relationship and relevant processes.</p> <p>The “joint working group on localisation of the Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee” has identified three models of partnership between international and local or national actors, as well as two forms of cooperation. It is of course certainly possible for international humanitarian stakeholders to act with more than one partnership/form of cooperation, but the following framework reflects the current practice of humanitarian stakeholders:</p>	<p><b>1. Natural partnerships</b> (associations and networks)</p>	<p>Humanitarian projects are implemented with or through affiliated partners. These are national associations or sections that, as a network, generally have a (non-executive) secretariat. They act as equal partners in the international network. These national associations/sections are legally and financially autonomous; generally speaking, they were established and are rooted in their own societies. Management bodies are exclusively local in their make-up. They are registered as a local legal entity under national law, are fully subject to national provisions, and are accountable to the national authorities.</p>
	<p><b>2. Strategic partnerships</b> between international humanitarian stakeholders and local/national stakeholders in the country concerned</p>	<p>This partnership constitutes an alliance based on common objectives and complementary capacities. Cooperation takes place on a long-term basis and is not limited to individual projects. The partnership is set out in a memorandum of understanding. A large part of this has to do with capacity development, including organisational development, both within and outside projects. Planning of individual projects is generally carried out by the local partner and coordinated through dialogue. Monitoring is undertaken on both sides. The International Partner is accountable to the donors for public funds. Partners are registered in accordance with national law, as described in 1.</p>
	<p><b>3. Project-based partnerships</b> between international humanitarian stakeholders and local/national civil defence institutions or affected communities.</p>	<p>This cooperation continues for the duration of a specific project. Funding is provided by the international NGO while the local NGO takes responsibility for implementing the project. The partnership is regulated by a project contract and not by a memorandum of understanding. Capacity development is restricted to the topics focused on in the project and partners are registered.</p>
	<p><b>4. Cooperation as a network of international NGOs with affiliated national NGOs</b> (represented with programme components or local branch office in the region)</p>	<p>The international NGO is in charge of planning, funding and issuing instructions. The projects are carried out by the affiliated national NGOs, possibly by other local partners as subcontractors.</p>
	<p><b>5. Direct implementation, cooperation with local stakeholders as representatives of the target group</b></p>	<p>Local stakeholders are only involved in implementation to a very limited extent. Responsibility for planning is assumed solely by the international NGO with a dedicated local office. The number of staff working at the office of the international partner is therefore considerable.</p>

### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- HQs provide capacity strengthening (HR and technical capacity, training, etc.) to COs. This could include additional HR capacity, capacity building or surge support during proposal development periods;
- HQs increase their own technical capacity in relation to CBPF funding;
- HQs clarify with COs that the partnership model does not, per se, constitute a barrier to CBPF applications;
- COs liaise with OCHA HFU and highlight their experience of capacity building and their added value to CBPF in the context of localization;
- COs act as intermediaries for local partners and take on compliance and quality assurance functions, including capacity building for local partners;
- OCHA HFU encourages INGO-NNGO or first responders' partnerships with a strong capacity building component (e. g. through scorecard);
- COs and local partners partner with other NGOs for information sharing: For German INGOs there is usually a regular meeting at the German embassy, for local partners an NNGO forum, and for both an NGO forum. Both can also influence the HCT and the CBPF Advisory Board through the NNGO and INGO representatives on these boards. Funding in general and CBPFs in particular should be discussed more strategically in these fora. At the policy level COs can influence CBPFs through HQ engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;
- OCHA continue to provide support, in particular to local and national partners, to strengthen their capacity for making successful applications for CBPF funding, based on experience and lessons learned in the various countries with CBPFs;
- Local partners with capacity constraints partner with INGOs for the submission of CBPF proposals or seek technical support for CBPF project implementation;
- Donors continue to support capacity strengthening initiatives for organizations (local and national organizations especially), which are planning to apply for CBPF funding.

### ACBAR Twinning Programme Afghanistan

ACBAR through funding support from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), has begun its twinning programme in 2015. As the international community's physical presence in Afghanistan declines, but at the same time humanitarian needs grow and crises become more complex, there is still an understanding of the need to stay engaged in the country to respond to humanitarian needs. Consequently, donors are now utilizing the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), a pooled funding mechanism, as one of the chief tools to disperse humanitarian aid. For the international community, engaging with National NGOs in a spirit of partnership, and aiming to reinforce rather than replace national capacities has therefore become a key to sustainability and development.

The ACBAR Twinning Program aims to address this issue through a comprehensive program, which provides practical on the job training and mentoring, combined with trainings, which strengthen the institutional capacities of each organization. They have identified few International NGOs to do mentoring support to National NGOs and to enable them to qualify for OCHA's CHF grants. Johanniter and The Welthungerhilfe (WHH) are the German NGOs among them.

Johanniter is currently mentoring four NN-NGOs. Two of them (ASCHIANA and OHPM) have successfully passed the Due Diligence and the Capacity Assessment conducted by OCHA. Both organisations are now eligible to apply for the CHF funding on their own.

"When I received the good news that ASCHIANA passed OCHA's due diligence and Capacity Assessment, I immediately informed Johanniter. I went to their office and showed them the letter from OCHA, which states that we passed the assessment and we are now eligible to apply for CHF fund" said Mohammad Nazar Program manager of ASCHIANA.

He also added that they have long wanted to apply for CHF funding, but it is difficult for them to compete with INGOs. "Although the assessment took so long to be completed, we are thankful that we have now passed and appreciate Johanniter's extended support."

Similarly, Dr. Farhad Paiman, General Director, OHPM thanked Johanniter "for coaching

and mentoring them in grant management and compliance, putting systems in place, internal controls and adherence to donor guidelines.”

At the same time, ANCC, one of The Welthungerhilfe’s (WHH) partner, first applied to the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), but failed to pass the due diligence process to obtain membership. With this in mind ANCC applied for the Twinning Program to receive the support of an International NGO (INGO) such as WHH. „We knew that partnering with WHH would not only help us understand the CHF process better, but also allow us to observe how an INGO develops strategies and policies“ explains Mr. Naseri, ANCC Director. „The Twinning Program focused on developing our strategic plan, which was an important need identified in the due diligence process. When WHH was preparing their own strategic plan, they called us to participate in its development. That is how we learnt: by collaborating.“ Throughout the Twinning Program, ANCC was also offered trainings to address gaps. „Applying these good practices in our office not only capacity built our staff but also supported the NGO growth“ explains Naseri.

As the program went on, WHH chose to collaborate further with ANCC. „We partnered with ANCC because we could notice a big progress within their organization and staff. Their commitment to improving their service to the neediest is palpable“ explains Zarmina Rasouli, Partnership Relation officer for WHH’s „Strengthening Civil Society and Partnership Programme“. In September 2016, with the help of ACBAR and WHH, ANCC applied once again for the CHF and passed the due diligence process, making them eligible to apply for CHF funds. For Ms. Zarmina Rasouli „It is a success for ANCC that proved their commitment to self-improvement. It is also a success for ACBAR and WHH, as we proved that long term capacity building efforts do pay off. Partnerships have to go beyond the simple „contracting“ relationships and when two organizations work and learn from each other, we get results.“

The Twinning program will be ending in March 2019, but NNGOs are strongly lobbying to DFID for the continuation of the twinning program to benefit more NNGOs and for them to access CHF funding.

## Eligibility

Another obstacle to applying for CBPF funding mentioned by respondents from German INGOs and local partners is a lack of eligibility (14 %). Applying for CBPF funding requires successful completion of a due diligence and capacity assessment exercise. While the process (depending on the country) can be work and time intensive, most of the documents required for due diligence will be provided by the organization’s headquarters. Respondents who have completed the eligibility process, did not, on the whole, encounter any challenges in the process. One pre-requisite for eligibility for CBPF funding is registration with the national government, which not all German INGOs and local partners possess. As with the due diligence process, the capacity assessment process is at the discretion of the CBPF and the and HC in the country. The global Operational Handbook sets out four modalities for the capacity assessment, which differ in their complexity: the Internal Capacity Assessment (ICA) conducted by OCHA; the externally-contracted Capacity Assessment (ECA) conducted by an external auditor; the Proxy Capacity Assessment (PCA) through already existing assessments (i.e. UN or other donor assessments); and Due Diligence (DD) only, without capacity assessment. While at the discretion of the HC, the Advisory Board should be consulted and could influence the capacity assessment process and its complexity. In accordance with the global guidelines, the ICA is OCHA’s preferred approach, but practical implementation of the capacity assessment varies country-by-country. Key informants indicate that the capacity assessment poses challenges for some local partners and they point to long waiting times and backlogs. Key informants report cases in which local partners have had to wait years for the capacity assessment to be completed. However, key informants indicate that the due diligence and capacity assessment process has secondary benefits in so far as it may support internal capacity strengthening by identifying gaps (e. g. in policies) and also serve as an indication of quality for other donors.

### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- COs and local partners consider registering with national authorities and complete the DD/CA process;
- OCHA continue to streamline the CBPF process without restricting its inclusivity. The introduction of a global CA or proxy CA (as preferred CA option) and unified reporting in line with the Grand Bargain would lower the barrier to entry and reduce the administrative burden on partners;
- HQs advocate a global CA or proxy CA (as the preferred CA option) amongst donors through the Pooled Fund Working Group and towards OCHA through the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform<sup>16</sup>. The proxy CA would allow the utilization of assessments already completed for other donors (e. g. UN, ECHO, etc.), in order to obtain access to CBPFs instead of conducting an additional assessment, thus avoiding duplication of effort, minimizing the workload of partners and the OCHA, and at the same time reducing delays in the assessment process.

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16 See also OCHA (2015) p42 and NRC (2017) p5, p30 and p34



## » Obstacles: Application

Around half (52 %) of the respondents to the online survey stated that their office had previously applied for CBPF funding in their particular country, and more than 80 % of these respondents had received CBPF funding at least once.

According to the online survey, a majority of German INGOs and their local partners did not encounter any obstacles when they last applied for CBPF funding. 57 % of respondents reported not having encountered any challenges, while 43 % of respondents reported having encountered challenges. Respondents from German INGOs reported fewer challenges than respondents from their local partners. Every second respondent from local partners reported having faced challenges during their last application for CBPF funding.

The majority of challenges occurred during the technical review (56 %), followed by grant application/proposal development (44 %), strategic review (33 %), and the due diligence procedure (22 %)<sup>17</sup>. Respondents from local partners reported more challenges with the technical review, while respondents from German INGOs reported more challenges with the grant application/proposal development. The challenges were to do with: communication; a lot of communication back and forth and a lack of feedback; time pressure and delays in the process; a perceived lack of transparency in the process; varying process quality depending on the level of qualification of HFU and cluster management; conflicts of interest and UN bias; and technical issues related to GMS and internet connectivity.

### Time Frame

The allocation of funds through CBPFs is a long process involving several different steps, starting with development of the CBPF allocation strategy, and followed by proposal development and the review and approval of submissions. The first and third steps are collaborative efforts involving OCHA HFU and clusters and the participation of a few selected cluster partners, while the second step – proposal development – is the responsibility of the applicant. Proposal development usually starts with the release of the CBPF allocation strategy detailing the geographic and programmatic scope of the allocation and ends with the project proposal submission in GMS. The time allocated for proposal development varies country-by-country. Based on publicly available allocation strategies, the time allocated for proposal development (including weekend days) varied between 8 and 17 days with an average of 13 days for the first standard allocation in 2017, between 9 and 18 days with an average of 14 days for the second standard allocation in 2017, and between 9 and 23 days with an average of 18 days for the first standard allocation in 2018. It therefore seems that the time allocated for the development of proposals for standard allocations increased between 2017 and 2018. That said, timelines are indicative only and key informants report cases of shortened timelines, national and religious holidays, and changes to the parameters of the allocation strategy during the proposal development phase causing stress and frustration for the organizations submitting applications<sup>18</sup>.

According to the online survey (excluding respondents who could not answer), only a minority of respondents rated the time available for the submission proposals after the publication of the strategy for standard allocations in 2017/2018 as good (23 %). The same number of respondents rated the time available as poor (23 %), while the remainder rated the time available as average (29 %) or fair (26 %). Respondents from German INGOs rated the time available for proposal submission more negatively than the respondents from local partners. 6 % of the respondents from German INGOs and 40 % from local partners rated the time available for proposal submission

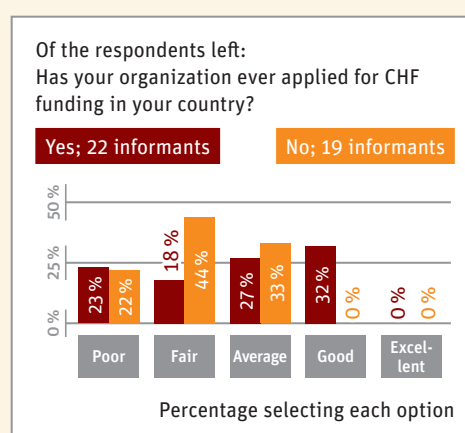
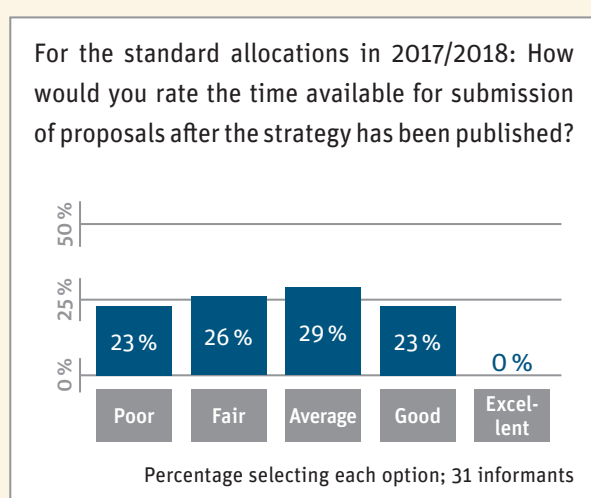
17 Responses do not add up to 100 % as multiple choices were allowed. Respondents were asked to prioritize/provide their three most important choices.

18 See also ICVA (2014) p33

as good. 25 % of the respondents from German INGOs and 30 % from local partners rated it as average. 38 % of the respondents from German INGOs and 13 % from local partners rated it as fair. And 31 % of the respondents from German INGOs and 13 % from local partners rated it as poor. Respondents who had never applied for CBPF funding rated the time available more negatively than respondents who had previously applied, reflecting that time availability is also an important reason for not submitting proposals to start with (see above). However, it needs to be noted that a longer time for proposal development might also result in the overall process taking longer, which was also criticized by stakeholders<sup>19</sup>.

### Length of time for CBPF proposal development

Eight out of ten respondents rated the time available for the submission of proposals (usually around two weeks) as average or less than average. One in four respondents rated the time available as poor.



Source: CBPF Online Survey

While the time for proposal submission is usually limited, it is only part of a longer process. The average duration of the standard allocation process from launch of the allocation strategy to HC approval varies widely from country to country. The CBPF annual reports for 2017 show that the shortest (average) process for standard allocations at country level lasted only 21 days, while the longest (average) process took 95 days. Across all CBPF countries standard allocations took on average a little less than 60 days. The limited variation in the time allowed for proposal development combined with the large variation in the duration of the complete process, indicates that the efficiency of the management of the review and approval of submissions varies widely and opportunities for strengthening and shortening the process exist. However, it needs to be noted that decreasing the time of the CBPF allocation process beyond a certain point could reduce the level of coordination and the inclusiveness of the process<sup>20</sup>.

19 See for example ICVA (2014) p5 and p19 and OCHA (2015) p23 and p28

20 See also OCHA (2015): [The] Processes run the risk, however, of being too heavy and bureaucratic and should remain simple. In this there is also a recognized trade-off between inclusiveness and rapidity associated with flexibility (often described as quality of process vs. timeliness).

## Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- COs and local partners prepare for CBPF allocations by coordinating with HQ, OCHA HFU, clusters and partners, by preparing for proposal development, and by allocating sufficient capacity before the allocation strategy is published;
- OCHA HFU and clusters share timelines for upcoming CBPF allocations with all stakeholders well in advance, so that partners can prepare and plan ahead<sup>21</sup>;
- HQs ensure rapid feedback on CBPF proposals to COs whenever HQ clearance for proposals is required;
- COs and local partners coordinate with clusters, OCHA HFU and advisory boards as regards the time-frame for proposal development allowed in the allocation strategy, if there is agreement amongst NGOs that the time allocation is insufficient;
- CBPF Advisory Boards consider the submission of concept notes instead of full proposals, in order to reduce time pressure and the costs/burden of proposal development in accordance with the OCHA Operational Handbook for Country-Based Pooled Funds.

## Allocation strategy

Allocation strategies are developed on the basis of the priorities and criteria set forth in the Humanitarian Response Plan. The HC, supported by OCHA HFU, is supposed to use existing coordination mechanisms to establish a process for developing the strategy. The analysis used to support the development of the strategy should be evidence-based with reference to verifiable data (i.e. assessments). This process should result in an allocation strategy paper which summarizes the analysis, strategy and aims of the standard allocation, and how the funding strategy was conceived. The allocation paper should include information on: how the allocation fits into the humanitarian context; the allocation strategy and related priorities; the total amount to be allocated (giving a detailed break-down, as far as possible, of amounts to be allocated according to priority/cluster/sector/region); the criteria for project prioritization (reflected in a prioritization matrix or “scorecard”); and the timeline.

Publicly available allocation strategies for standard allocation in 2017 and 2018 vary widely in content and scope. While some allocation strategies include elaborate supporting material (e. g. on proposal and budget preparation), other allocation strategies are more limited in scope. Some allocation strategies do not meet the standards of the global guidelines and do not contain information on allocation according to sector/cluster or criteria for project prioritization.

According to the online survey (excluding respondents who could not answer), most respondents valued CBPF allocation strategy documents as guidance for their individual project proposals in 2017/2018. 10 % of respondents rated the documents as excellent, followed by good (34 %), average (28 %), fair (21 %) and poor (7 %). In this case the feedback from respondents from German INGOs largely corresponds with the feedback from their local partners.

Respondents rated the geographic and programmatic focus of the CBPF allocation strategy documents in 2017/2018 even more positively: 20 % of respondents rated the documents as excellent, followed by good (43 %), average (7 %), fair (27 %) and poor (3 %). On the other hand, the geographic focus of CBPF allocations, often on hard-to-reach or insecure areas, constitutes a challenge for some organizations. 14 % of the respondents from German INGOs which had never applied for CBPF funding, mention the geographic areas eligible for

21 See also ICVA (2014) p20

CBPF funding applications as the reason for not applying. Key informants note that German INGOs tend to be risk averse and this prevents them from applying for funding for programmes in hard-to-reach or insecure areas<sup>22</sup>. Another reason for not applying is the small size of CBPF allocations: As a result, according to key informants, German INGOs tend to apply for CBPF allocations only if the CBPF allocation strategy allows for applications for programmes in areas where the organization already operates existing programmes.

Furthermore, key informants note both a lack of transparency in the decision-making process and perceived bias in the focus of the allocation strategy – according to the interests of donors and OCHA and as a result of negotiations within clusters – instead of the strategy being strictly needs-based<sup>23</sup>. Key informants note power imbalances in advisory boards and clusters between the UN and large INGOs on the one hand and small INGOs and local partners on the other hand.

#### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- COs and local partners coordinate and participate in clusters in order to provide input and influence programmatic and geographic prioritization within the allocation strategy;
- OCHA reviews experience gained in each particular country and the content of allocation strategies and ensures that global guidelines and minimum standards regarding the content and scope of allocation strategies are followed;
- OCHA collects relevant information, reviews best practice throughout the CBPFs (allocation strategies, capacity building, innovations, etc.), ensures cross-learning, and considers conducting CBPF stakeholder surveys in a number of CBPF countries (e. g. in Somalia);
- OCHA and clusters ensure better and clearer communication about decision making processes, including who has participated in the decision making and who decided what, rather than communication limited to decisions and outcomes from a “black box” consultative process. Advisory Board and ICCG meeting minutes relating to CBPFs should be made accessible to all stakeholders in a timely manner.

#### Prioritization process

The purpose of the strategic review following the submission of proposals is to identify and prioritize project proposals or concept notes which are considered to be best suited to addressing the needs identified in the allocation paper. Proposals are reviewed and shortlisted by a review committee appointed by each sector or cluster. Review committees should be established through a consultative process within the respective clusters. Members of the respective review committees should be nominated from the active members of the relevant sectors/clusters, ensuring equitable representation of UN agencies and NGOs. The strategic review should be conducted on the basis of criteria outlined in a prioritization matrix (scorecard), to be agreed before the allocation paper is issued. All CBPFs should apply standard prioritization matrices with scoring in each of the following key areas: (i) strategic relevance, (ii) programmatic relevance, (iii) cost effectiveness, (iv) management and monitoring, and (v) participation in coordination. Using globally standardized categories, specific criteria should be agreed by OCHA HFU in consultation with clusters/sectors. The same set of categories should be applied by all clusters/sectors using a single scorecard for each allocation. Whilst the same scorecard categories and weightings should apply across all CBPFs, the specific criteria and/or subsidiary questions should be reviewed before each allocation.

<sup>22</sup> See also Quack (2016), p21

<sup>23</sup> Criticism regarding the transparency of grant allocation processes is not exclusive to the CBPF. See for example Quack (2016) p33.

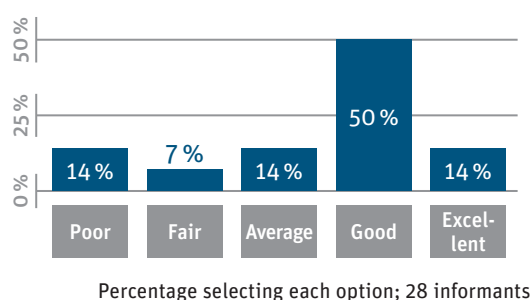
According to the online survey (excluding respondents who could not answer), most respondents were satisfied with the transparency of CBPF allocation processes and decision making (i.e. the selection of projects for funding) in 2017/2018. 14 % of the respondents rated the transparency of the process as excellent, followed by good (50 %), average (14 %), fair (7 %) and poor (14 %). While a majority appreciated the transparency of the process, 19 % of the respondents from organizations which had applied for CBPF funding rated the transparency of the process as poor.

The transparency of the CBPF allocation process seems to be an issue especially for respondents from organizations which have applied for, but did not receive funding. This indicates that there may be a need for improved communication about the prioritization process and criteria and the reasons for projects being rejected.

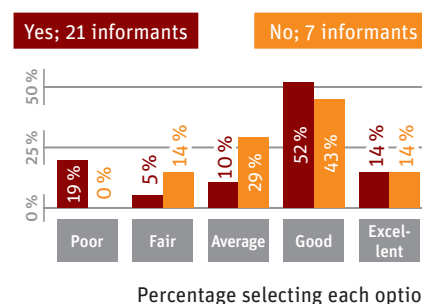
### Transparency of the CBPF allocation process

A majority of respondents were satisfied with the transparency of the CBPF allocation process.

How would you rate the transparency of CHF allocation process and decision making (i.e. selection of funded projects) in 2017/2018?



Of the respondents left:  
Has your organization ever applied for CHF funding in your country?



Source: CBPF Online Survey

A little less than 50 % of the funding goes to INGOs, followed by a little more than 30 % to UN agencies and a little more than 20 % to national NGOs. At country level, the share of funding going to UN agencies varies widely. While UN agencies receive less than a tenth of total funding from five CBPFs, they receive a third in eight countries. In Nigeria 70 % of the total funding went to UN agencies<sup>24</sup>. While the share of CBPF funding allocated to local and national responders in 2017 almost achieved the World Humanitarian Summit commitment of 25 % across all funds, there is significant variation between countries: Funding allocated to NNGOs varies between 82 % in Pakistan and only 2 % in Ethiopia. Four funds allocate less than 10 % and a further six less than 25 % to NNGOs, which is below the target set in the Grand Bargain for 2020.

Key informants regularly mentioned a perceived bias of CBPF funding towards UN agencies and pointed to a power imbalance in the steering committees – usually the cluster coordinator, two UN representatives and two NGO representatives – and a conflict of interest for the cluster coordinator, who is usually seconded from the UN agency leading the cluster and line managed by a section chief of a UN programme, which is usually also submitting a project proposal to the same committee.

<sup>24</sup> According to OCHA key informants, high shares of funding to UN agencies can be a result of UN agencies procuring supplies ('core pipeline'), which are subsequently provided free-of-charge to NGO partners, distorting the funding shares reported by GMS.

Key informants feel that CBPFs do not always allocate funds to the organizations and projects which are best able to deliver in terms of impact in a specific context, and tend instead to allocate funds to those which are best at communication and networking. Key informants note the importance of communication, visibility and reputation for increasing the chances of being awarded CBPF funding<sup>25</sup>. Key informants feel that this results in larger INGOs having an advantage over smaller INGOs and especially over NNGOs. Key informants feel that access to Country-Based Pooled Funds is not a level playing field, but is biased towards UN agencies and larger INGOs<sup>26</sup>. Key informants perceive that some partners, especially UN agencies, receive allocations by default.

Other issues raised by key informants include the size of allocations, project duration, multi-sectoral proposals, and communication.

The average CBPF standard allocation across years, partners and funds is around \$ 485,000. However, there is significant variation between countries depending on the financial situation/total funding available of the particular CBPF: Average standard allocation sizes in Colombia are only \$ 175,000, while average allocations in DRC and Yemen are around \$ 1.3m. There does not seem to be a clear trend: Averages have oscillated between \$ 350,000 and almost \$ 600,000 during the past few years. German INGOs received an average of \$ 350,000, which, according to key informants, is significantly less than grants from other donors. The risk ratings of German INGOs would permit applications for larger amounts, but the limited amount of funding available at the CBPF and cluster level combined with a lot of interest on the part of organizations, results in a gap between supply and demand, consequent competition and cuts to proposed budgets. Key informants also note that proposal development and programme support costs remain fixed to some extent, making the cost-benefit ratio of these allocations unsustainable. According to key informants, these allocation sizes are only cost-effective in the case of existing programmes or through cross-subsidizing CBPF projects with other funds, which puts NNGOs without access to bilateral funding at a disadvantage<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, organizations are allowed to apply for multiple allocations (i.e. in different clusters/sectors) per round of allocations, which would allow the funding of support costs. And lower initial allocations could result in larger allocations in the future, due to improved risk rankings and reputation. In this context, costs for proposal development and in terms of lower initial allocations could/should be seen as an investment. Some key informants expressed concern that the disbursement of larger allocations could lead to a reduction in the number of implementing partners. But in the context of increasing funding of CBPFs combined with the workload of processing individual allocations, an increase in allocation sizes without a decrease in the number of implementing partners seems realistic/more likely. At the same time, larger average allocation sizes and the 'rationalizing' of partnerships to decrease administrative burdens might result in a barrier to entry for smaller NNGOs<sup>28</sup>.

Key informants also mentioned challenges in relation to project duration: According to the global manual, the maximum time allowed for the implementation of CBPF allocations is 12 months, although the HC may grant exceptions. The average CBPF-funded project lasts around 9 months, with only the DRC systematically taking advantage of the possibility of going beyond the 12 months (average: 21 months). According to key informants, the combination of a long allocation process and short project duration puts CBPF funds at a significant disadvantage compared with other donors (see donor preference). At the same time, the length of the allocation process (see above) contradicts to some extent the argument put forward for limiting project duration to less than 12 months because of the emergency focus of CBPFs. Key informants consider project duration to be too short, especially in the context of protracted crises and continuing needs, raising concerns about the sustainability of the results achieved by the projects<sup>29</sup>.

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25 See also Quack (2016) p21 on German INGOs' restraint regarding communicating about their programmes and achievements.

26 See also Caritas (2014) p10

27 See also ICVA (2014) p15 and Caritas (2014) p27

28 See also Caritas (2014) p14

29 See also ICVA (2014) p24, OCHA (2015) p12 and OCHA and ICVA (2015) p2

Multi-sectoral or integrated programmes offer advantages in terms of effectiveness and efficiency over projects implemented in a silo or single sector approach<sup>30</sup>. While often also encouraged by OCHA and the clusters, structures for prioritizing multi-sectoral or integrated programmes are often absent. In the case of a CBPF proposal touching on more than one domain/sector, responsibilities regarding the review process are often unclear. Only 2 % of proposals in GMS are categorized as multi-sectoral.

Key informants also note that the quality of the allocation process depends on the HFU and Cluster management and therefore varies depending on their experience. Key informants frequently mentioned challenges with regards to: communication; documents being sent back and forth repeatedly, even because of minor comments including spelling; and multiple contact persons, who sometimes provide uncoordinated comments. While it seems that the narrative tends to be approved rather quickly, the technical review especially seems to present challenges.

### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that:

- COs and local partners familiarize themselves with the allocation strategy and prioritization process (i.e. scorecard) and prepare evidence-based quality proposals (i.e. based on assessments) which meet allocation strategy requirements and take account of scorecard criteria;
- OCHA HFU and clusters communicate clearly about the prioritization process and criteria and give feedback on reasons for rejection and follow-up questions;
- clusters communicate transparently and document the selection of review committees; ensure turnover and varied representation of cluster partners in review committees to prevent perceptions of biased decision-making; consider allowing only cluster partners which have not submitted proposals for allocation to participate in review committees, in order to prevent perceptions of strategic (down)scoring of competing projects;
- COs and local partners participate in clusters and volunteer for review committees;
- A longer duration of projects (in protracted crises) and larger allocation sizes would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of CBPF funded projects. German INGOs and local partners can engage in advocacy on these issues at global and country levels. At the policy level HQs can influence CBPFs through engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;
- OCHA issue global guidelines on the review process for multi-sectoral and integrated programmes and the implications for cluster/sector budgets

30 See also OCHA and ICVA (2015) p4

## » Obstacles: Implementation

Around half (52 %) of the respondents to the online survey stated that their office had previously applied for CBPF funding in their particular country. More than 80 % of these respondents have received CBPF funding at least once.

According to the online survey, most German INGOs and their local partners did not encounter any obstacles when they last applied for CBPF funding. 63 % of the respondents reported not having encountered any challenges, while 37 % report having encountered challenges. Respondents of German INGOs and local partners report almost identical incidence of challenges in programme implementation.

Respondents reported challenges during disbursement, project monitoring, revision, reporting and termination. The challenges were mostly related to: delayed disbursement of funds (especially the final payment), which proves especially challenging for local partners in the absence of funds to absorb or bridge the resulting funding gap<sup>31</sup>; challenges in relation to the approval of no-cost extensions; and the termination of projects in protracted crises, when projects close despite a need for continuation. Key informants frequently mentioned challenges in relation to communication, such as a lack of feedback from OCHA, delayed feedback, frequent communication back and forth, or a combination of these. Key informants provided mixed feedback on monitoring: Some partners appreciated the M&E system and the feedback, which improved programme quality, whereas other partners objected to limited technical programme knowledge amongst OCHA M&E staff.

### Best practice and recommendations

It is recommended that OCHA consider ways of disbursing final allocations sooner, especially to local partners.

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31 See also Caritas (2014) p19 and ICVA (2014) p6



## IV. Best practices and recommendations

The recommendations included in the various chapters of the study are summarized below. For ease of reading, the recommendations are grouped by addressee – the participating German INGOs' headquarters and country offices, the participating local partners, OCHA and clusters – and ordered according to the occurrence in the main text.

The recommendations need to be read with the differing mandates, objectives and approaches to programme implementation of the participating German INGOs in mind. CBPFs are not a panacea as regards humanitarian funding and may not be a suitable donor for all German INGOs and NNGOs. Not all the recommendations are applicable to all German INGOs. Most recommendations aim to inform German INGOs, their local partners and the donor community regarding best practice for improving their access to CBPFs (see: Introduction. Study Objectives).

To headquarters of German INGOs	
Issue	Recommendation
<b>Donor preference</b>	That HQs conduct an internal analysis and – alone or together with potential partners – develop a strategy describing whether and, if so, how they want to engage with CBPF funding in the future, taking into account their specific capacities;
	That HQs improve the provision of information to COs regarding CBPFs and the possibility of applying for funding at country level; encourage and offer incentives to COs to apply to country-based sources of funding; instruct COs to prioritize applications to CBPFs and provide the required strengthening of capacity to enable them to do so (see below);
<b>Capacity constraints</b>	That HQs provide capacity strengthening (HR and technical capacity, training, etc.) to COs. This could include additional HR capacity, capacity building or surge support during proposal development periods;
	That HQs increase their own technical capacity in relation to CBPF funds;
<b>Partnership model</b>	That HQs clarify with COs that the partnership model does not, per se, constitute a barrier to CBPF applications;
<b>Eligibility, DD and CA</b>	That HQs advocate adoption of a global CA or proxy CA (as the preferred CA option) amongst donors through the Pooled Fund Working Group and towards OCHA through the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform <sup>32</sup> . The proxy CA would allow the utilization of assessments already completed for other donors (e. g. UN, ECHO, etc.) in order to obtain access to CBPFs instead of conducting an additional assessment, thus avoiding duplication of effort, minimizing the workload of partners and the OCHA, and at the same time reducing delays in the assessment process;
<b>Timeframe</b>	That HQs ensure rapid feedback on CBPF proposals to COs whenever HQ clearance for proposals is required;
<b>Cluster engagement</b>	That HQs advocate stronger representation of relevant national/local NGOs in platforms related to coordination in general and to CBPFs in particular; and that HQs raise the challenges and obstacles faced by local and national partners and make appropriate recommendations at fora where NNGOs are not adequately represented;
<b>Project duration and allocation size</b>	A longer duration of projects (in protracted crises) and larger allocation sizes would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of CBPF-funded projects; German INGOs and local partners could engage in advocacy on these issues at both the global and the country level; At the policy level, HQs can influence CBPFs through engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG.

32 See also OCHA (2015) p42 and NRC (2017) p5, p30 and p34

To country offices of German INGOs	
Issue	Recommendation
<b>Cluster engagement</b>	That COs strengthen their participation in coordination (with NGO fora, donors, INGOs, NNGOs, etc.) in general and in cluster coordination in particular <sup>33</sup> . Active participation in a cluster (e. g. as co-lead or regional lead, or as a member of an SAG or a working group,) was highlighted as the single most important pre-requisite for the success of CBPF applications <sup>34</sup> . Involvement in a cluster ensures timely receipt of information about upcoming allocations, facilitates participation in decision-making processes (e. g. prioritization of programmatic activities and geographic areas) and improves visibility and reputation (see below). Participation in CBPF review committees strengthens CBPF capacity. Communication, advocacy, visibility and reputation are important factors contributing to the success of CBPF applications. Where necessary and possible, organizations should engage in joint advocacy and ensure mutual support for partners' participation at the relevant levels of coordination. The target audiences are OCHA HFU, clusters and cluster partners, and other CBPF stakeholders. Another path worth considering is programmatic or geographic specialization;
	That COs advocate – and OCHA facilitates – stronger representation of relevant national/local NGOs in platforms related to coordination in general and to CBPFs in particular, and that COs raise the challenges and obstacles faced by local and national partners and make appropriate recommendations at fora where NNGOs are not adequately represented;
	That COs support national NGOs in participating in key coordination and decision-making fora and exercises, including humanitarian country teams, cluster coordination, pooled fund advisory groups, coordinated needs assessments and HRP development, thereby promoting stronger partnerships and increased direct access to humanitarian funding for local NGOs and national NGOs engaged in front-line response <sup>35</sup> .
<b>Partnership model</b>	That COs liaise with OCHA HFU and highlight their experience of capacity building and their added value to CBPF in the context of localization;
	That COs act as intermediaries for local partners and take on compliance and quality assurance functions, including capacity building for local partners.
<b>Lack of information</b>	That COs partner with other NGOs for information sharing: For German INGOs there is usually a regular meeting at the German embassy, for local partners an NNGO forum, and for both an NGO forum. Both can also influence the HCT and the CBPF Advisory Board through the NNGO and INGO representatives on these boards. Funding in general and CBPFs in particular should be discussed more strategically in these fora. At the policy level, COs can influence CBPFs through HQ engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;

33 See also Germany (2014) p6

34 See also OCHA (2015) p25

35 See also Caritas (2014) p6

<b>Eligibility, DD and CA</b>	That COs consider registering with national authorities and complete the DD/CA process;
<b>Timeframe</b>	That COs prepare for CBPF allocations by coordinating with HQ, OCHA HFU, clusters and partners, by preparing for proposal development, and by allocating sufficient capacity before the allocation strategy is published;
	That COs coordinate with clusters, OCHA HFU and advisory boards as regards the time-frame for proposal development allowed in the allocation strategy, if there is agreement amongst NGOs that the time allocation is insufficient;
<b>Allocation strategies</b>	That COs coordinate and participate in clusters in order to provide input and influence the programmatic and geographic prioritization within the allocation strategy;
<b>Prioritization process</b>	That COs familiarize themselves with the allocation strategy and prioritization process (i.e. scorecard) and prepare evidence-based quality proposals (i.e. based on assessments) which meet allocation strategy requirements and take account of scorecard criteria;
	That COs and local partners participate in clusters and volunteer for review committees;
<b>Project duration and allocation size</b>	A longer duration of projects (in protracted crises) and larger allocation sizes would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of CBPF funded projects. German INGOs and local partners can engage in advocacy on these issues at both the global and the country level. At the policy level, HQs can influence CBPFs through engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG.

To local partners COs and FOs	
Issue	Recommendation
<b>Cluster engagement</b>	That local partners strengthen their participation in coordination (with NGO fora, donors, INGOs, NNGOs, etc.) in general and in cluster coordination in particular <sup>36</sup> . Active participation in a cluster (e. g. as co-lead or regional lead, or as a member of an SAG or a working groups) was highlighted as the single most important pre-requisite for the success of CBPF applications <sup>37</sup> . Involvement in a cluster ensures the timely receipt of information about upcoming allocations, facilitates participation in decision-making processes (e. g. prioritization of programmatic activities and geographic areas), and improves visibility and reputation (see below). Participation in CBPF review committees strengthens CBPF capacity. Communication, advocacy, visibility and reputation are important factors contributing to the success of CBPF applications. Where necessary and possible, organizations should engage in joint advocacy and ensure mutual support for partners' participation at the relevant levels of coordination. The target audiences are OCHA HFU, clusters and cluster partners, and other CBPF stakeholders. Another path worth considering is programmatic or geographic specialization;
<b>Lack of information</b>	That local partners partner with other NGOs for information sharing: For German INGOs there is usually a regular meeting at the German embassy, for local partners an NNGO forum, and for both an NGO forum. Both can also influence the HCT and the CBPF Advisory Board through the NNGO and INGO representatives on these boards. Funding in general and CBPFs in particular should be discussed more strategically in these fora; At the policy level, COs can influence CBPFs through HQ engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;
<b>Capacity constraints</b>	That local partners with capacity constraints partner with INGOs for the submission of CBPF proposals or seek technical support for CBPF project implementation;
<b>Eligibility, DD and CA</b>	That local partners consider registering with national authorities and complete the DD/CA process;
<b>Timeframe</b>	That local partners prepare for CBPF allocations by coordinating with HQ, OCHA HFU, clusters and partners, by preparing for proposal development, and by allocating sufficient capacity before the allocation strategy is published;
	That local partners coordinate with clusters, OCHA HFU and advisory boards as regards the time-frame for proposal development allowed in the allocation strategy, if there is agreement amongst NGOs that the time allocation is insufficient;
<b>Allocation strategies</b>	That local partners coordinate their participation in clusters in order to provide input and influence programmatic and geographic prioritization within the allocation strategy;

36 See also Germany (2014) p6

37 See also OCHA (2015) p25

<b>Prioritization process</b>	That local partners familiarize themselves with the allocation strategy and prioritization process (i.e. scorecard) and prepare evidence-based quality proposals (i.e. based on assessments) which meet allocation strategy requirements and take account of scorecard criteria;
	That local partners participate in clusters and volunteer for review committees;
<b>Project duration and allocation size</b>	A longer duration of projects (in protracted crises) and larger allocation sizes would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of CBPF funded projects. German INGOs and local partners can engage in advocacy on these issues at both the global and the country level; At the policy level, HQs can influence CBPFs through engagement with NGO representatives in the CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform and the Pooled Fund WG;

To OCHA and Clusters	
Issue	Recommendation
<b>Lack of information</b>	That OCHA HFU establish a single data repository for documents relating to CBPFs and define minimum requirements for documents (e. g. manuals, allocation strategies, etc.) <sup>38</sup> ;
<b>Partnership model</b>	That OCHA HFU encourage INGO-NNGO or first responders' partnerships with a strong capacity building component (e. g. through scorecard);
<b>Localisation</b>	That OCHA continue to provide support, in particular to local and national partners, to strengthen their capacity for making successful applications for CBPF funding, based on experience and lessons learned in the various countries with CBPFs;
<b>Eligibility</b>	That OCHA continue to streamline the CBPF process without restricting its inclusivity. The introduction of a global CA or proxy CA (as preferred CA option) and unified reporting in line with the Grand Bargain would lower the barrier to entry and reduce the administrative burden on partners;
<b>Cluster engagement</b>	That OCHA support national NGOs in participating in key coordination and decision-making fora and exercises, including humanitarian country teams, cluster coordination, pooled fund advisory groups, coordinated needs assessments and HRP development, thereby promoting stronger partnerships and increased direct access to humanitarian funding for local NGOs and national NGOs engaged in front-line response <sup>39</sup> .
<b>Timeframe</b>	That OCHA HFU and clusters share timelines for upcoming CBPF allocations with all stakeholders well in advance, so that partners can prepare and plan ahead <sup>40</sup> ;
	That CBPF Advisory Boards consider the submission of concept notes instead of full proposals, in order to reduce time pressure and the costs/burden of proposal development in accordance with the OCHA Operational Handbook for Country-Based Pooled Funds;
<b>Allocation strategies</b>	That OCHA review experience gained in each particular country and the content of allocation strategies and ensure that global guidelines and minimum standards regarding the content and scope of allocation strategies are followed;
	That OCHA collect relevant information, review best practice throughout the CBPFs (allocation strategies, capacity building, innovations, etc.), ensure cross-learning, and consider conducting CBPF stakeholder surveys in a number of CBPF countries (e. g. in Somalia);
	That OCHA and clusters ensure better and clearer communication about decision-making processes, including who has participated in the decision making and who decided what, rather than communication limited to decisions and outcomes from a "black box" consultative process. Advisory Board and ICCG meeting minutes relating to CBPFs should be made accessible to all stakeholders in a timely manner;

38 See also ICVA (2014) p20

39 See also Caritas (2014) p6

40 See also ICVA (2014) p20

<b>Prioritization process</b>	That OCHA HFU and clusters communicate clearly about the prioritization process and criteria and give feedback on reasons for rejection and follow-up questions;
	That clusters: communicate transparently and document the selection of review committees; ensure turnover and varied representation of cluster partners in review committees to prevent perceptions of biased decision-making; consider allowing only cluster partners which have not submitted proposals for allocation to participate in review committees, in order to prevent perceptions of strategic (down)scoring of competing projects;
<b>Multi-sectoral proposals</b>	That OCHA issue global guidelines on the review process for multi-sectoral and integrated programmes and the implications for cluster/sector budgets;
<b>Disbursements</b>	That OCHA consider ways of disbursing final allocations sooner, especially to local partners.

<b>To donors</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<b>General</b>	That donors aim to achieve the 15 % target of HRP funding channeled through CBPFs which was agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit. This could be achieved by increasing their own contributions and also by engaging in advocacy amongst potential new donors.
<b>Donor preference</b>	That donors keep multiple channels for funding open – direct, via UN, via Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and via innovative funding alternatives;
<b>Cluster engagement</b>	That donors continue to advocate increased and more active inclusion of local and national organizations in the relevant global and national CBPF steering mechanisms;
<b>Capacity constraints</b>	That donors continue to support capacity strengthening initiatives for organizations (local and national organizations especially), which are planning to apply for CBPF funding;



## » Annex I. Selected bibliography

**The table below is a list of selected documents reviewed for this study:**

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## » Annex II. List of key informants

- Angela Schwarz, Desk Officer, Auswärtiges Amt / German Federal Foreign Office
- Charles Okidi, Head of Mission, The Johanniter International Assistance
- David Throp, Pooled Fund Manager, OCHA
- David White, Pooled Fund Manager, OCHA
- Dr. Nabaz Mirani, General Manager, DAMA
- Hero Anwar, Deputy Director, REACH Iraq
- Ivo Körner, Country Officer, Caritas Germany
- Jens Oppermann, Pooled Fund Manager, OCHA
- Julia Broska, Programme Coordinator, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe
- Jürgen Feldmann, Head of Mission, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
- Jürgen Serway, Head of Mission, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
- Lisa Schoenmeier, Project Manager, Malteser International
- Michael Frischmuth, Head of Desk, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
- Simon Tremmel, Country Officer, Caritas Germany
- Stefan Recker, Programme Coordinator, Caritas Germany
- Stefano Temporin, Country Director, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe
- Tobias Benedikt Lutz-Bachmann, Project Manager, Malteser International
- Vijay Raghavan, Country Director, The Johanniter International Assistance
- Wondimu Kenea, Country Coordinator, Malteser International

## » Annex III. Study methodology

### Methodological approach

The methodological approach is based on the study's analytical framework. The analytical framework translates the study objectives into research questions and sub-questions and identifies appropriate data collection methods and sources (see: Annex III. Research matrix).

The study was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This mixed approach made it possible to combine the individual strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods while at the same time overcoming their individual limitations. The study was based on three inter-linked components: a desk and secondary data review, an online survey, and interviews with key informants.

The desk and secondary data review aims to provide a summary of the recent development of CBPFs. The desk review is based on CBPF related publications available online, including manuals, evaluations, studies and annual reports (see: Annex I. Selected bibliography). The secondary data review (SDR) aims to provide an overview of the access of German INGOs to CBPFs and is mainly based on the OCHA Grant Management System (GMS) platform. The GMS is the standard platform for the management of all Country-Based Pooled Funds. Implementing partners use this interface to submit project proposals and reports. And OCHA coordinates project reviews, monitoring and partner performance. The system tracks allocation timelines, and captures proposals and project results. The SDR aims to answer questions such as: Which German organizations receive how much CBPF funding for which programmes and in which countries?

The online survey was designed to collect summary data and information on: German INGOs' and their local partners' access to CBPFs; the obstacles they face; and best practice and recommendations for all countries with CBPFs. The online surveys were completed by the organizations' in-country staff with the most knowledge of and interaction with CBPFs. Only one person per organization and country completed the online survey. Generally, respondents were either the Country Director or the Head of Programmes. To ensure that feedback reflected the widest possible range of possible interaction of organizations with CBPFs, stakeholders were followed up individually, resulting in a final response rate to the online survey of around 90 %. Partners giving feedback included those who have never applied for CBPF funding and some who have received multiple CBPF allocations. In total 44 online surveys were completed, representing 44 country offices of five German INGOs and 15 local partners in 15 countries with CBPFs.

The key informant interviews were designed to generate more in-depth information on German INGOs and their local partners' access to CBPFs, the obstacles they face, and best practice and recommendations. For the key informant interviews, three countries – Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan – were selected, based on the presence of the organizations commissioning this study. Each interview was conducted with the member of in-country staff who was most knowledgeable on the subject of CBPFs. As a rule, respondents were either the Country Director or the Head of Programmes. In total 14 key informant interviews with NGO representatives were completed, representing 12 country offices of German INGOs and local partners in Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan. Three key informant interviews were conducted with OCHA CBPF managers and one with the GFFO. All interviews were conducted via Skype and lasted on average 45 minutes. With the permission of interviewees, the key informant interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded to facilitate analysis.

Two data collection tools were utilized for the online survey and key informant interviews: a short and structured questionnaire for the online survey and a longer and semi-structured questionnaire for the key informant interviews.

## Time-frame

The research was conducted during 30 working days between 17 September and 14 December 2018.

Activity	Time-frame
Research planning	21 September – 5 October 2018
Data collection	8 October – 1 November 2018
Analysis and reporting	23 October – 12 November 2018
Draft report	12 November 2018
Publication	5 March 2019

## Focus and limitations

Although precautions were taken to ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of the findings, the study faces limitations, which need to be kept in mind when reading this report:

- In the context of heterogeneity of countries and humanitarian responses and also of CBPF and cluster management at country level, the research is only valid for the time-frame and countries studied. The study presents findings and recommendations for a number of countries, but they are not necessarily applicable to all CBPF countries and do not necessarily represent the findings for individual CBPF countries. Shifts in humanitarian and political priorities and the evolution and further development of CBPFs will have an impact on both findings and recommendations.
- The limited time-frame available for this study, combined with its scope, restricted the degree of probing and the cross-validation of individual findings. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to consider the views of cluster coordinators, who are important stakeholders in the CBPF process. It would be important to consider the experience of cluster coordinators, because anecdotal evidence suggests that there is significant heterogeneity with regards to the familiarity of coordinators with the CBPF process as well as their practical approach to implementing the CBPF process. Future studies would do well to collect the views of cluster coordinators regarding the CBPF process.
- The focus on a limited selection of German INGOs and their local partners combined with their heterogeneity (e. g. as regards mode of programme implementation) limited the available sample size and decreases the generalizability of the findings. Future studies would do well to collect the views of the wider NGO community regarding their access to CBPF funding, possible obstacles, and best practice and recommendations.
- The findings are based on stakeholders' responses and reflect their views on given topics. Perceptions may deviate from the current actual implementation of CBPF processes, depending on how well-informed respondents are and their temporal and geographical frame of reference.

## Data quality

Several measures were put in place to ensure the reliability of the data and the analysis:

- **Sample size:** To increase the sample size and thus the validity of the findings, an online survey was added to the initial study methodology. The online survey was designed to complement and verify the key informant interviews. In order to ensure an unbiased sample and also reflect the views of stakeholders less engaged with CBPFs, all the identified key informants and online survey recipients were followed up individually. At the close of the survey, 90 % of identified stakeholders had completed the online survey.
- **Triangulation:** Key data and information were collected through both the online survey and the key informant interviews: this allowed for triangulation of the data and information. Key findings were also compared with secondary data, including GMS findings and OCHA publications.
- **Report Review:** Two draft versions and the final report were reviewed by the consortium commissioning this study. Stakeholders had a total of two weeks to provide comments on different versions of the study report.

## Annex IV. Research matrix

### The proposed research aims to:

1. Provide a summary of recent developments of CBPFs
2. Provide an assessment of challenges German INGOs are facing in accessing and implementing CBPF allocations
3. Provide recommendations to German INGOs and the GFFO on improving access to CBPFs

The research will be guided by the matrix below, which summarizes research criteria, questions, sub-questions and data collection methods and sources.

Criteria	<b>Situation analysis (1)</b>
Research Question	How do CBPFs work?
Sub questions to respond to each question	How do CBPFs work in theory and in practice? What is the process of application and implementation? How do these processes differ between countries? What are recent/current developments in policy and implementation of CBPFs? Why CBPF? Specific benefits of CBPF for different stakeholders?
Collection method(s) and sources	Desk review of CBPF documentation/evaluation Secondary data review (if applicable)

Criteria	<b>Situation analysis (2)</b>
Research Question	Where do German INGOs provide humanitarian assistance? Which countries receive CBPF funding? How do German INGOs interact with CBPFs?
Sub questions to respond to each question	In which countries are German INGOs providing humanitarian assistance? Which countries are receiving the majority of CBPF funding/CBPF funding provided by GFFO? In which humanitarian sectors are German INGOs predominantly active? General German involvement in the humanitarian system – involvement in which kind of clusters, advisory boards, etc.? Which humanitarian sectors receive the majority of CBPF allocations? / German INGOs share of them? To what extent are German INGOs aware of CBPFs, apply for funding and receive funding? How do German INGOs train their staff? Share knowledge on CBPF process/ applications? How do German INGOs interact with humanitarian coordination in general and CBPFs in particular? Are there big differences between the German INGOs in question?
Collection method(s) and sources	Desk review of CBPF documentation/evaluation Secondary data review (if applicable) Online survey (if applicable) Key informant interviews with staff of German INGOs and respective cluster coordinators

Criteria	Challenges
Research Question	What challenges are German INGOs and partners facing when applying for funding and implementing CBPF projects?
Sub questions to respond to each question	<p>What challenges are German INGOs and partners facing when applying for CBPF project funding?</p> <p>Which application challenges are specific to German INGOs as medium-sized players?</p> <p>Which steps/requirements of the CBPF application process (see: Annex VI: CBPF standard allocation workflow ) prove especially challenging?</p> <p>What challenges are German INGOs facing when implementing CBPF projects?</p> <p>Which implementation challenges are specific to German INGOs as medium-sized players?</p>
Collection method(s) and sources	<p>Desk review of CBPF documentation</p> <p>Online survey (if applicable)</p> <p>Key informant interviews with staff of German INGOs and respective cluster coordinators</p>

Criteria	Analysis and Recommendations
Research Question	<p>What can German INGOs do to improve their access to CBPFs?</p> <p>Which changes to the application/implementation of CBPFs would improve access of German INGOs?</p>
Sub questions to respond to each question	<p>How do German INGOs deal with challenges in applying for funding/implementing CBPF projects? What can German INGOs do to improve their access to CBPFs?</p> <p>How could German INGOs be supported in applying for funding and implementing CBPF projects? Which stakeholders could support German INGOs in applying for funding and implementing CBPF projects?</p> <p>Which changes to the application process/implementation of CBPFs would improve access of German INGOs?</p> <p>What would be important for the German Government to do?</p>
Collection method(s) and sources	<p>Online survey (if applicable)</p> <p>Key informant interviews with staff of German INGOs and respective cluster coordinators</p> <p>Workshop (if applicable)</p>



## Annex V. List of countries with CBPF

In 2017, CBPFs received funds totaling \$ 833m, of which \$ 698m were allocated to projects:

Country	2017 allocation
Yemen	125,972,652
Ethiopia	92,335,599
Iraq	76,532,852
South Sudan	63,198,338
Somalia	57,748,379
Turkey	45,820,368
Afghanistan	44,886,619
DRC	35,828,428
Syria	34,618,141
Sudan	32,197,797
Nigeria	23,959,149
CAR	22,143,989
OPT	11,738,444
Myanmar	9,795,285
Jordan	8,455,215
Pakistan	5,799,505
Lebanon	5,747,904
Colombia	1,167,618
<b>Total</b>	<b>697,946,281</b>

Source: OCHA GMS Business Intelligence





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# COUNTRY-BASED POOLED FUNDS – A REALITY CHECK

STUDY REPORT

