

Humanitarian Pooled Funds

‘Grab and Go’ Pocket Guide

January 2025



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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Acknowledgement

This guidance was authored by Emma Cliffe for ICVA. The consultant would like to thank all those who contributed their time and support to this project.

This project is made possible by the generous support of our donors, in particular the Federal Government of Belgium.

About ICVA

The [International Council of Voluntary Agencies](#) (ICVA) is a global network of 168 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in 160 countries, operating at global, regional, national and local levels, whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

What does this mean?

Humanitarian pooled funds: There is no widely agreed definition of humanitarian pooled funds, nor a comprehensive list of funds. However, humanitarian pooled funds can be understood as multi-donor mechanisms aimed at providing a more predictable, flexible, timely and responsive source of financing for humanitarian action. Although the structure of each fund varies based on its purpose and founding organisations, they typically share common elements such as governance mechanisms, allocation systems, and management or secretariat functions. Funds may be established as separate legal vehicles or hosted by UN agencies (such as OCHA and UN Women), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (such as Start Network and Norwegian Refugee Council), local and national non-governmental organisations (L/NNGOs) (such as Fundo Casa Socioambiental), Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (such as the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies or International Committee of the Red Cross), multilateral organisations (such as Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank), or private sector entities (such as Adam Smith International). Funds typically have strict eligibility criteria that limit who can apply for and access the funding. Some funds are only open to members, such as the Change Fund, IFRC Funds, and Start Network Funds. Others such as Country Based Pooled Funds are open to all humanitarian actors responding to Humanitarian Response Plans. See ICVA (2024) [Pooled Funding Models: Governance Systems](#).

Examples of humanitarian pooled funds

Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF)

Launched in 2021, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) was established to support humanitarian assistance and development projects in Afghanistan. The AHTF is administered by the Islamic Development Bank, and UN agencies, INGOs and L/NNGOs are eligible to receive funding. The AHTF is supported by donors including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Since its inception, it has mobilised US \$35 million. For more information, contact Ahmad AbuGhazaleh AGhazaleh@isdb.org.

Aid Fund for Northern Syria (AFNS)

Launched in 2022, the Aid Fund for Northern Syria (AFNS) was established to support humanitarian assistance projects in Syria. The AFNS is administered by Adam Smith International, and INGOs and L/NNGOs are eligible to receive funding. The AFNS is supported by donors including France, Germany, Jersey, the Netherlands, Qatar, United Kingdom and United States. In 2023, it mobilised US \$58.7 million. For more information, visit the [AFNS website](#), review the [knowledge hub](#), register on the [Opportunities Portal](#), or contact registration@afns.org or techsupport@metricsled.com (for technical support).

Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCIS)

NGO-led

Launched in 2013, the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCIS) was established to support humanitarian assistance and development projects in Somalia. The BRCIS is administered by Norwegian Refugee Council, and INGOs and L/NNGOs are eligible to receive funding. The BRCIS is supported by donors including European Commission, Qatar, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and World Bank. Since its inception, it has mobilised US \$70 million. For more information, visit the [BRCIS website](#) or contact Perrine Piton perrine.piton@nrc.no.

Casa Socio-Environmental Fund

NGO-led

Launched in 2005, the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund was established to support grassroots organisations and initiatives that promote environmental conservation, sustainable development, and social justice in Latin America. It is administered by Fundo Casa Socioambiental, and L/NGOs and community-based organisations are eligible to apply for funding. It is supported by donors including philanthropic foundations and private sector entities. Since its inception, the Fundo Casa Socioambiental has disbursed over US \$50 million to more than 3,000 initiatives across the region. For more information, visit the [Fundo Casa website](#), or contact contato@casa.org.br.

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

Launched in 2005, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established to support humanitarian assistance projects worldwide. The CERF is administered by OCHA on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and only UN agencies are eligible for direct funding. However, INGOs and L/NGOs can access CERF funding indirectly through implementing partnerships with UN agencies. The CERF is supported by 62 donors. In 2024, it mobilised US \$574 million. For more information, visit the [CERF website](#) and the [CERF Data Hub](#), or review the [list of focal points](#).

Change Fund

NGO-led

Launched in 2022, the Change Fund was established to support projects that respond to new phases of conflict, adverse climate effects or disease outbreaks across 27 priority countries. The Change Fund is administered by Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR), and NEAR L/NGO members are eligible to apply for funding. The Change Fund is supported by the Hilton Foundation. For more information, visit the [Change Fund website](#), or contact info@near.ngo.

Community Resilience Partnership Program Trust Fund (CRFPF)

Launched in 2021, the Community Resilience Partnership Program Trust Fund (CRFPF) under the Community Resilience Financing Partnership Facility was established to support climate adaptation projects in Asia and the Pacific. Priority is given to projects in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and Nepal. The CRFPF is administered by the Asian Development Bank, and all Asian Development Bank Developing Member Countries are eligible to apply for funding. The CRFPF is supported by the Green Climate Fund, France, Nordic Development Fund, and United Kingdom. For more information, visit the [CRFPF-CRPPTF website](#) or contact Arghya Sinha Roy aroy@adb.org.

Country-Based Pooled Funds

Launched in 1997, Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) were established to support humanitarian assistance projects. CBPFs are administered by OCHA on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and UN agencies, INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. There are currently 15 operational CBPFs located in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Syria Cross-Border, Ukraine and Yemen. CBPFs are supported by 46 donors. In 2024, they mobilised US \$1.09 billion. For more information, visit the [CBPFs website](#), review the [CBPF Global Guidelines](#), or access the specific country pages to find the [list of focal points](#) for each fund.

Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF)**NGO-led**

Launched in 1979, the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) was established to provide immediate financial support to Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies for rapid response to disasters and crises. The DREF is administered by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are eligible to apply for funding. The DREF is supported by donors including Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, along with philanthropic foundations and private sector entities. In 2023, the DREF mobilised over CHF 70 million. For more information, visit the [DREF website](#), or contact dref@ifrc.org.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

Launched in 2016, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) was established to support education in emergencies and protracted crises. It is administered by UNICEF, and UN agencies, INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. Applications for Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) are usually led by governments or UN agencies, but NGOs can apply as partners within consortiums or as implementing agencies. NGOs can also access First Emergency Response (FER) funding through coordination mechanisms such as Education Clusters, which identify priority activities and partners for emergency funding. Since its inception, ECW has mobilised more than US \$1.6 billion. For more information, go to the [ECW website](#).

Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF)**NGO-led**

Launched in 2011, the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) was established to fund, support and manage innovations and research in the humanitarian sector. The HIF is administered by Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA), and INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. In 2023, it supported projects valued at £5.2 million. For more information, go to the [HIF website](#) or contact info@elrha.org.

Human Mobility Hub**NGO-led**

Launched in 2023, the Human Mobility Hub (HMH) was established to improve the protection of people on the move, including refugees, internally displaced people, and migrants, and to provide them with basic assistance. Projects are implemented in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. It is administered by Norwegian Refugee Council, and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. It is supported by donors including the European Commission, Norway, Switzerland, United States, and private sector entities. In 2024, the HMH mobilised US \$3.5 million. For more information visit the [HMH website](#), or contact Katleen Maes katleen.maes@nrc.no.

Livelihood and Food Security Fund in Myanmar (LIFT)

Launched in 2009, the Livelihood and Food Security Fund (LIFT) was established to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor households in Myanmar. LIFT is administered by UNOPS, and INGOs, L/NGOs, civil society organisations, UN agencies, academic and research institutions and private sector entities are eligible to apply for funding. LIFT is supported by donors including Australia, Canada, European Union, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States. Since its inception, it has mobilised US \$539 million. For more information, visit the [LIFT website](#), review the [project guidelines](#), or contact lift@unops.org.

Nabni Building for Peace Facility (Nabni B4P)

NGO-led

Launched in 2024, the Nabni Building for Peace Facility (Nabni B4P) was established to support locally-led reconstruction and peacebuilding and social cohesion projects in conflict-affected communities in Iraq and Yemen. Nabni B4P is administered by the Norwegian Refugee Council, and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. Nabni B4P is supported by Germany. Since its inception, it has mobilised US \$16 million. For more information, visit the [Nabni B4P website](#), review the [Grant Allocation Manual](#), or contact info@nabni-facility.org.

Latin America and the Caribbean Humanitarian Fund (LAC HF)

Launched in 2024, the Latin America and the Caribbean Humanitarian Fund (LAC HF) was established to support humanitarian assistance projects, aligned with the Humanitarian Response Plans. It is administered by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinators in each country where it operates, and UN agencies, INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. In 2024, the LAC HF had country funding envelopes in Colombia and Haiti. For more information, visit the [LAC HF website](#), review the [global guidelines](#), or contact ocha-lachf@un.org.

National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA)

Launched in 2019, the National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA) was established to support the long-term development of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The NSIA is administered by IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are eligible to apply for funding. The NSIA is supported by donors including Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland and United States. In 2023, NSIA mobilised more than CHF 5.2 million. For more information, visit the [NSIA website](#), or contact NSIA.Office@ifrc.org.

Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa (RHFwCA)

Launched in 2021, the Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa (RHFwCA) was established to support humanitarian assistance projects, aligned with the Humanitarian Response Plans. The RHFwCA is administered by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinators in each country where it operates, and UN agencies, INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. In 2024, the RHFwCA had country funding envelopes in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. In 2023, the RHFwCA allocated US \$36.4 million to 57 partners in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. For more information, visit the [RHFwCA website](#) or contact ocha-rhfwca@un.org.

Sahel Regional Fund (SRF)

NGO-led

Launched in 2022, the Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) was established to support cross-border humanitarian assistance and development projects in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger. The SRF is administered by the Danish Refugee Council, and INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. The SRF is supported by United Kingdom. Since its inception, the SRF has mobilised US \$41 million. For more information, visit the [SRF website](#), review the [operations manual and supporting templates](#), or contact information@sahelregionalfund.org.

Start Fund	NGO-led
<p>Launched in 2014, the Start Fund was established to provide rapid response humanitarian funding towards three types of emergencies: underfunded small to medium scale emergencies; spikes in chronic emergencies; and forecasts of impending emergencies. The Start Fund is administered by the Start Network, and INGOs and L/NGO Start Fund members are eligible to apply for funding. The Start Fund is supported by donors including Germany, Ireland, Jersey, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the IKEA Foundation. Since its inception, the Start Fund has disbursed around £134 million to responses in 76 countries. For more information, visit the Start Fund website or contact startfund@startprogrammes.org.</p>	
Start Ready Fund	NGO-led
<p>Start Ready Fund Launched in 2021, the Start Ready Fund pre-positions funding for crises that happen with regular and predictable patterns of recurrence, like floods, droughts, and heatwaves. The Start Ready Fund is administered by the Start Network, and INGOs and L/NGO Start Fund members are eligible to apply for funding. The Start Ready Fund is supported by donors including the European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and several philanthropic foundations. For more information go to the Start Ready website or contact startready@startnetwork.org.</p>	
Start Fund Bangladesh	NGO-led
<p>Start Fund Bangladesh Launched in 2017, Start Fund Bangladesh was established to provide rapid response humanitarian funding in Bangladesh. Start Fund Bangladesh is administered by the Start Network, and INGOs and L/NGOs Start Fund members operating in Bangladesh are eligible to apply for funding. Since its inception, it has mobilised more than £8.86 million. For more information visit the Start Fund Bangladesh website or contact cmqr@startfundbangladesh.org.</p>	
Start Fund Nepal	NGO-led
<p>Start Fund Nepal Launched in 2023, Start Fund Nepal was established to provide rapid response humanitarian funding in Nepal. Start Fund Nepal is administered by the Start Network, and INGOs and L/NGOs Start Fund members operating in Nepal are eligible to apply for funding. For more information visit the Start Fund Nepal website or contact startfundnepal@startnetwork.org.</p>	
Start Fund Ukraine	NGO-led
<p>Launched in 2023, Start Fund Ukraine was established to provide rapid response humanitarian funding in Ukraine. Start Fund Ukraine is administered by the National Network of Local Philanthropy Development on behalf of the Start Network, and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. For more information, visit the Start Fund Ukraine website, review the guidance, or contact startfund@startprogrammes.org.</p>	

Syria-Türkiye Solidarity Fund	NGO-led
<p>Launched in 2023, the Syria-Türkiye Solidarity Fund was established to provide humanitarian assistance in response to the devastating earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye in February 2023. The Syria-Türkiye Solidarity Fund is administered by Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) in partnership with the Syrian Networks League (SNL), and NEAR L/NGO members are eligible to apply for funding. For more information, visit the Syria-Türkiye Solidarity Fund website, or contact info@near.ngo.</p>	
Whole of Africa Programme	NGO-led
<p>Launched in 2021, the Whole of Africa Programme was established to support more flexible regional humanitarian programming across the Africa region. The Whole of Africa Programme is administered by Norwegian Refugee Council and INGOs and L/NGOs are eligible to apply for funding. The Whole of Africa Programme is supported by Germany. Since its inception, it has mobilised US \$32 million.</p>	
Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)	
<p>Launched in 2014, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) was established to support peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance projects. The WPHF is administered by UN Women, and L/NGOs, specifically women-led organisations (WLOs) and women's rights organisations (WROs) are eligible to apply for funding. The WPHF currently supports projects in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Columbia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Fiji, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen. Additionally, other countries have been designated as eligible for funding including Libya, Somalia and Sri Lanka. The WPHF is supported by donors including Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, European Union, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States. In 2023, the WPHF mobilised US \$45 million to support 293 civil society organisations. For more information, visit the WPHF website.</p>	

What are some quick facts and figures?

There has been significant growth in humanitarian pooled funds in recent years, in terms of both the number and value of these funds. Currently, transparent and centralised tracking and reporting of humanitarian pooled funds are largely confined to the data publicly available for CBPFs and CERF. In 2024, the contributions to CBPFs and CERF totalled US \$1.71 billion, a reduction on the record contributions of US \$1.95 billion reported in 2022. In 2024, the allocations under CBPFs and CERF totalled US \$1.28 billion. See [OCHA Financial Tracking Service](#) and [OCHA Pooled Funds Data Hub](#). For further details on other humanitarian pooled funds go to the individual websites and annual reports for the specific funds. Despite high levels of contributions, CBPFs and CERF make up a relatively small share of humanitarian financing. In 2023, CBPFs and CERF accounted for just 5% (US \$2.3 billion) of international humanitarian assistance provided by governments and the European Union. See ICVA (2023) [Pooled Funding at a Crossroads: A comprehensive review and analysis](#) and Development Initiatives (2024) [Falling Short? Humanitarian Funding and Reform](#). Humanitarian pooled funds have become an important vehicle for meeting [Grand Bargain](#) and [Charter4Change](#) commitments on localisation. In 2023, CBPFs provided 31% (US \$338 million) of funding directly and a further 10% (US \$69 million) of funding indirectly to L/NGOs, more than ever before. See Development Initiatives (2024) [Falling Short? Humanitarian Funding and Reform](#). There are also a growing number of NGO-led and NGO-focused humanitarian pooled funds. See examples in text boxes above.

What's the background?

Pooled funds have evolved significantly over recent decades. In 1979, IFRC launched one of the first ever humanitarian pooled funds with the DREF. In 1991, General Assembly Resolution 46/182 established the Central Emergency Revolving Fund as a rapid response cash flow mechanism for emergencies. In 1997, the first CBPF was launched in Angola to support the humanitarian response to the civil war. The 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda, led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, institutionalised pooled funds to enhance humanitarian action. That same year, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund transitioned into the CERF, providing rapid funding for emergencies and underfunded crises. Additionally, [Fundo Casa Socioambiental](#) launched the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund. Between 2009 and 2015, several funds were launched including BRCIS, HIF, LIFT, Start Fund and WPHF. In 2016, the [Grand Bargain](#), agreed upon at the World Humanitarian Summit, committed to greater use of pooled funds to increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders. Between 2016 and 2020, several funds were launched including ECW and Start Fund Bangladesh. In 2018, the [UN Funding Compact](#) called for expanded use of mechanisms like CBPFs, CERF, and multi-partner trust funds to enhance coherence, predictability, and flexibility in humanitarian and development financing. Between 2021 and 2024, numerous funds were launched including AFNS, AHTF, Change Fund, CRFPF, HMH, LAC HF, Nabni B4P, NSIA, RHFWSA, SRF, Start Ready Fund, Start Fund Nepal, Start Fund Ukraine, Syria-Türkiye Solidarity Fund, Whole of Africa Programme. By 2022, contributions to CBPFs and CERF from private donors significantly increased, including from philanthropic foundations and corporations.

Why does it matter?

Humanitarian pooled funds are becoming increasingly popular with donors and NGOs as an effective mechanism to deliver on the Grand Bargain commitment to allocate at least 25% of humanitarian funding “as directly as possible” to local and national responders, including L/NGOs, government authorities and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Donors value pooled funds for their ability to improve the flexibility, timeliness, and predictability of funding; promote coherence and reduce duplication; and shift decision-making closer to affected communities. Pooled funds enhance transparency by providing clear tracking of contributions and allocations, such as through the OCHA Financial Tracking Service and Pooled Fund Data Hubs. For some donors, pooled funds offer a quick and efficient way to spend funds, particularly at the end of the financial year or when they lack an in-country presence; and can help donors avoid the bureaucratic complexities of managing numerous small grants. For other donors, pooled funds provide a solution to overcome restrictions on funding certain organisations, such as the European Union's limitations on funding entities registered outside of Europe. NGOs recognise the value of pooled funds in responding to neglected or underfunded crises, and accessing unearmarked resources that enable flexible, needs-driven programming. In particular, NGO-led pooled funds can be a valuable complement to UN mechanisms, offering large-scale, comprehensive solutions – including at the regional level – with the capacity to absorb significant funding. Pooled funds also present opportunities for blended financing to support humanitarian and development programmes and are being explored as a potential avenue for NGOs to access climate financing. By addressing funding gaps and advancing localisation commitments, pooled funds can transform humanitarian financing to create a more equitable and impactful system that empowers local and national responders and better serves affected communities. See IFRC (2020) [Desk Review on Enhancing the Potential of Pooled Funds for Localisation](#) and Norwegian Refugee Council (2022) [Pooled Funds: The New Humanitarian Silver Bullet?](#).

What's been achieved?

Humanitarian pooled funds have made notable progress and achieved significant milestones in recent years, reflecting their growing importance in global humanitarian financing. The number and value of pooled funds have increased, enabling greater resource mobilisation and impact. More funds are now being directed to L/NNGOs, alongside improved representation of L/NNGOs in governance and advisory boards, ensuring their voices shape decision-making processes. Pooled funds have also become an important vehicle for meeting Grand Bargain commitments on localisation. In 2023, CBPFs provided 31% (US \$338 million) of funding directly and a further 10% (US \$69 million) of funding indirectly to L/NNGOs, more than ever before. The CERF, though not able to directly fund NGOs, has expanded access for NGOs through intermediaries, with dedicated NGO funding windows during the COVID-19 pandemic and initiatives focused on gender-based violence, WLOs, and WROs. Efforts to harmonise due diligence and capacity assessments have reduced administrative burdens, making it easier for NGOs to access and manage pooled funds. Pooled funds have also piloted innovative approaches to address thematic and systemic challenges. Initiatives like the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan and the EU Nexus Response Mechanism in Myanmar have advanced the nexus agenda, while CERF's Anticipatory Action Framework and Start Fund Anticipation have supported proactive responses to emerging crises. Geographic focus has expanded with regional funds in Asia and the Pacific, West and Central Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, NGO-led models have demonstrated how locally managed pooled funds can drive effective and equitable humanitarian responses, encouraging greater inclusivity and resilience. Most recently, the governments of Denmark, Switzerland and United Kingdom released the (2024) [Guidance note for donors: Promoting inclusive and locally-led action through humanitarian pooled funds](#), to provide greater clarity for donors on how humanitarian pooled funds can be used as an effective vehicle to meet and promote commitments on localisation and participation.

What's left to do?

Despite notable progress, NGOs, especially L/NNGOs, still face significant hurdles in accessing humanitarian pooled funds. Many NGOs struggle to meet donor due diligence and compliance requirements, which can be duplicative and administratively burdensome, and limited feedback on partner capacity assessments leaves NGOs uncertain about how to improve. Application documents are often only provided in English. Proposal development processes can be marked by short submission deadlines and lengthy review processes, along with technical difficulties affecting online submission platforms. Implementation of projects can be affected by slow disbursement of funds, short implementation periods, limited budget flexibility, and lack of adequate coverage of overheads and core costs such as staffing, which can also hinder the organisational development, capacity strengthening and sustainability of NGOs. While recent shifts towards multi-sectoral proposals offer opportunities for more holistic programming approaches, they can often disadvantage smaller, sector-specific L/NNGOs. Structural barriers persist, including inadequate representation of L/NNGOs in Humanitarian Country Teams, clusters and pooled fund governance mechanisms, reducing their influence on fund strategies and allocation. While good strides have been made on data transparency, the OCHA Financial Tracking Service reports on financial data for the CERF and CBPFs, which fails to include data on the multiplicity of other humanitarian pooled funds, including many of those referenced in this guidance. There is limited visibility of funding for WLOs, WROs and second-level recipients. As the number of these funds increase, there is a need for greater coordination and learning, to avoid duplication and competition. See Norwegian Refugee Council and OCHA (2019) [CBPFs: The NGO Perspective](#) and ICVA (2024) [NGO Perspectives on Pooled Funds](#).

How can you get involved?

- **Understand humanitarian pooled funds:** Familiarise yourself with the humanitarian pooled funds operating in your country or region, including their eligibility criteria, funding windows and timeframes, and application and proposal development processes. Review relevant pooled fund websites and online portals for the latest information. Keep an eye out for new and evolving pooled funds which you may be eligible for in future, such as the new [OCHA Regional Humanitarian Fund for Asia and the Pacific](#) which is expected to launch in 2025. OCHA is also considering opening new CBPFs in several locations. In addition to the humanitarian multi-donor pooled funds highlighted in this guidance, there are also a range of development and nexus pooled funds worth exploring including the [Global Innovation Fund](#), [UN Multi-Partner Trust Funds](#) and [EU Trust Funds](#).
- **Build relationships and apply for humanitarian pooled funds:** Actively participate in cluster mechanisms to contribute to humanitarian pooled fund strategies and allocation processes. Establish connections with fund administrators, governance forums and donors to stay informed about opportunities and advocate for equitable funding processes. Engage with UN agencies including UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, as well as larger INGOs, which often maintain contingency funds for rapid response purposes. Pursue partnerships with government authorities, UN agencies and/or INGOs to access some pooled funds such as AHTF, BRCIS, CERF, ECW and Start Fund.
- **Participate in humanitarian pooled fund governance mechanisms:** Seek representation in the AFNS Women's Advisory Group, OCHA CBPF Platform Advisory Group (PAG), OCHA CBPF NGO Dialogue Platform, OCHA CBPF Advisory Boards, Start Fund Bangladesh Executive Committee, Start Fund Nepal Executive Committee, Start Ready Executive Committee, and WPHF Global Funding Board and National Steering Committees. All these forums are open to both INGOs and L/NNGOs, aside from the Start Fund Committee which is limited to INGOs only. ICVA hosts the [CBPF Resource Facility](#) which aims to empower the participation of L/NNGOs in CBPF governance mechanisms. Through this initiative, all L/NNGOs nominated to serve on CBPF Advisory Boards are eligible to apply for stipends to cover costs associated with their participation. The CBPF Resource Facility is also launching a learning and mentoring programme in 2025, designed to enhance the capacity of L/NNGOs in CBPF governance mechanisms.
- **Join advocacy and dialogue platforms:** ICVA NGO members are eligible to participate in the ICVA Humanitarian Financing Working Group and ICVA Humanitarian Financing Sub-Working Group on Multilateral and Bilateral Funding. All Pooled Fund managers are eligible to apply to participate in the Community of Practice of Pooled Funds Managers co-chaired by ICVA and the Start Network. ICVA will soon be publishing work on 'Risk Sharing in Humanitarian Contexts' and is looking to expand its risk-sharing workshops with L/NNGOs, including a focus on humanitarian pooled funds. ICVA is also investigating how to increase data transparency in relation to pooled funding, including proposed aggregate indicators covering the diversity of pooled fund mechanisms. The AFS has commissioned research focused on integrated programming and localisation, "[Advancing Aid Fund for Syria's Strategic Approach – Lessons from Humanitarian Pooled Funds](#)". ICVA also regularly engages with donors on good practices related to pooled funds, localisation and risk-sharing, such as through the [Good Humanitarian Donorship](#) initiative.

What messages can you share with donors and funding partners?

- **Increase the quantity and quality of contributions to humanitarian pooled funds:** Provide contributions in line with commitments to the [Grand Bargain](#) and [Charter4Change](#), and the IASC (2024) [Guidance note for donors: Promoting inclusive and locally-led action through humanitarian pooled funds](#); including at least 25% of funding provided “as directly as possible” to L/NNGOs including WLOs, WROs, refugee-led organisations and grassroots organisations. Increase the levels of quality funding, including multi-year funding (24 months or more) and unearmarked funding (at least 30% of total contributions). Provide greater flexibility for budget adjustments, particularly for staff costs and changes in budget lines to enable greater responsiveness.
- **Enhance representation of local and national actors in humanitarian pooled fund governance mechanisms:** Value and amplify the voices of L/NNGOs and affected communities in decision-making. Allocate dedicated seats for L/NNGOs in clusters and humanitarian pooled fund governance mechanisms. Update operational guidance for clusters and humanitarian pooled fund governance mechanisms to promote inclusive approaches for representation and participation. Support initiatives such as the [CBPF Resource Facility](#) to support the participation and voice of L/NNGOs in decision-making.
- **Simplify and harmonise and simplify due diligence and compliance processes:** Streamline proposal, budgeting, reporting and audit requirements by recognising the [Less Paper, More Aid initiative](#) and the [Money Where It Counts protocol](#); rolling out tools such as the [OCHA Grant Management System](#), [UN Partner Portal](#) and [Harmonised Reporting \(8+3\) Template](#). Take steps to address specific barriers faced by L/NNGOs by adopting tiered due diligence arrangements and passporting models, along with common partner capacity assessments. Make guidance and templates available in multiple languages and provide technical support and feedback during proposal development. Explore alternative methods of reporting such as video updates or field visits where appropriate.
- **Promote equitable partnerships:** Support allocation of at least 15% of budgets to overhead costs for NGOs, including L/NNGOs, to support organisational development, and in addition, cover risk management, especially for safety and security costs. Encourage risk-sharing approaches that both support all partners to effectively prevent and respond to risks and cascade benefits and shared costs across all partners.
- **Invest in capacity strengthening initiatives:** Scale up capacity strengthening initiatives for humanitarian pooled funds such as information sessions, practical workshops and peer learning. Translate guidance and templates into multiple languages. Establish an online central repository for resources on humanitarian pooled funding mechanisms.
- **Improve financial tracking systems:** Introduce robust mechanisms and key performance indicators for the [OCHA FTS](#) and [OCHA Pooled Fund Data Hubs](#) to improve the transparency of humanitarian pooled funds provided to first-tier and second-tier L/NNGO recipients including WLOs, WROs, refugee-led organisations and grassroots organisations; and for specific clusters and cross-cutting issues such as protection and gender equality.
- **Embrace innovative and locally-led humanitarian pooled funds:** Scale up direct

access to CERF for NGOs, building on the learnings and good practices derived from the intermediary approaches piloted with IOM, UN Women and UNFPA. Trial 'pop-up' CBPFs in new locations. Explore transitioning the hosting arrangements of CBPFs to L/NNGOs in contexts such as Ukraine to enhance localised decision-making and ownership.

What are some good practices?

There are examples of humanitarian pooled funds that are led by INGOs (such as BRCIS, Global Start Fund, Nabni Building for Peace Facility, Human Mobility Hub, and SRF), and L/NNGOs (such as [Thousand Plus](#) and [National Emergency Pooled Fund](#) in India and [Shared Aid Fund for Emergency Response in the Philippines](#)). There are examples of humanitarian pooled funds that prioritise funding to L/NNGOs through dedicated mechanisms (such as the Start Funds and WPHF); specific allocation strategies (such as the CBPFs in Somalia, Syria Cross-Border, Venezuela and Yemen); caps on sub-granting (such as the CBPF in South Sudan); additional points for locally led proposals (such as the CBPF in Myanmar) and prioritising locally led consortia (such as the CBPF in the Occupied Palestinian Territory). See OCHA (2023) [CBPF Annual Reports](#). There are examples of enabling expanded access to CERF for NGOs through block grants to UN agencies who acted as intermediaries. In 2020, CERF provided IOM with US \$25 million to support NGOs engaged in health and protection programmes and provided UNFPA and UN Women with US \$25 million to specifically support women-led organisations and women's rights organisations on gender-based violence prevention and response programming. See OCHA (2021) [Independent Review of CERF COVID-19 NGO Allocation](#).

There are examples of multi-year funding contributions to humanitarian pooled funds from donors (such as Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom) and multi-year project durations, despite the lack of multi-year contributions from donors (such as the CBPF in Democratic Republic of the Congo). There are examples of humanitarian pooled funds which can rapidly disburse funds (such as the Start Fund which can disburse funds within 72 hours). See Start Fund (2022) [Findings From The Global Start Fund 2021-2022 Evaluation](#). There are examples of tiered donor due diligence and partner capacity assessments (such as those used by the Start Funds and CBPFs) to reduce administrative and financial barriers to entry for L/NNGO partners. There are examples of support for capacity-strengthening and organisational development initiatives such as the sharing of overhead costs (such as the Start Fund Bangladesh, LIFT in Myanmar and CBPFs in Syria Cross-Border and Somalia), walk-in clinics (such as the CBPF in Nigeria), twinning programmes (such as the CBPF in Afghanistan), and information sessions (such as the CBPF in CAR). See OCHA (2023) [CBPF Annual Reports](#).

There are also a range of resources which provide more examples of good practices and learnings. This includes the [IASC Good Practices and Initiatives of Grand Bargain Signatories](#) with specific sections on [Pooled Funds](#), and the Development Initiatives and Norwegian Refugee Council (2024) [Catalogue of Quality Funding Practices to the Humanitarian Response \(second edition\)](#).

Who can you contact?

ICVA NGO members are eligible to join the ICVA Humanitarian Financing Working Group, contact Manon Glaser manon.glaser@icvanetwork.org. All NGOs are eligible to join the Community of Practice of Pooled Funds Managers co-chaired by ICVA and the Start Network, contact Elise Baudot elise.baudot@icvanetwork.org and Lucretia Puentes lucretia.puentes@startnetwork.org.

We may not always get everything right! If you have suggested comments on the Grab and Go Pocket Guides, or more information you think we should add, including good practices and policy and advocacy messages, contact Manon Glaser manon.glaser@icvanetwork.org. We will regularly update these materials, so keep an eye out for the latest versions.

Where can you go for further information?

Essential reading

Belcher, E. and Rieger, N. (2024) Catalogue of Quality Funding Practices to the Humanitarian Response: A Reference Tool for Policymakers and Practitioners to Enhance the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Programming (second edition). Development Initiatives and Norwegian Refugee Council. Available at:

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Featherstone, A. and Mowjee, T. (2020) Desk Review on Enhancing the Potential of Pooled Funds for Localisation. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Available at: <https://gblocalisation.ifrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FINAL-GBW2-pooled-funding-forlocalisation.pdf>

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Montemurro, M. and Baudot Queguiner, E. (2023) Pooled Funding at a Crossroads: A Comprehensive Review and Analysis. International Council of Voluntary Agencies. Available at: <https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2023/06/Pooled-Funding-at-a-Crossroads-A-Comprehensive-Review-and-Analysis.pdf>

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2023) OCHA Pooled Funds Complementarity. Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs). Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ocha-pooled-funds-complementary-central-emergency-response-fund-and-country-based-pooled-funds-25-august-2023>

Rieger, N. and Girling-Morris, F. (2024) Out of the ordinary: New approaches to financing NGO-led crisis response mechanisms. Development Initiatives and Norwegian Refugee Council. <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/out-of-the-ordinary/new-approaches-to-financing-ngo-led-crisis-response-mechanisms.pdf>

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Guidance, tools and templates

Education Cannot Wait (2024) *Multi-Year Resilience Programme Manual*. Available at: <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/multi-year-resilience-programme-myrp-manual>

Global Innovation Fund (2024) *Funding Application Guidance*. Available at: <https://www.globalinnovation.fund/apply-for-funding>

Government of Denmark, Government of the United Kingdom and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2024) *Guidance note for donors: Promoting inclusive and locally-led action through humanitarian pooled funds*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/guidance-note-donors-promoting-inclusive-and-locally-led-action-through-humanitarian-pooled-funds-november-2024>

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2022) *Country-Based Pooled Funds Global Guidelines*. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/CBPF%20Global%20Guidelines_0.pdf

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2024b) *Country-Based Pooled Funds Data Hub*. Available at: <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/>

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2024c) *Grant Management System*. Available at: <https://gms.unocha.org/en>

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2024d) *Financial Tracking System*. Available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/>

Save the Children and Start Network (2023) *Start Fund Handbook*. Available at: https://startnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/EN_Start%20Fund%20Handbook_Dec%202023.pdf

Training courses

United Nations Children's Fund (n.d.) *Managing a Pooled Fund Allocation Process within Clusters*. Available at: <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=33198>

Webinars

United Nations (2024) *How OCHA's Pooled Funds advance meaningful partnerships for innovations in humanitarian response (HAS 2024 Side Event)*. Available at: <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1o/k1o93qkoyv>

Podcasts

Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) (2021) *NEAR Dispatches - Upcoming Episode on Pooled Funds in the Humanitarian Sector*. Available at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/near-dispatches-upcoming-episode-on-pooled-funds-in/id1558958240?i=1000513492453>

Further reading

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Charter4Change (2020) *Lobby Brief: Localization, COVID GHRP, and UN Country Based Pooled Funds*. Available at: <https://charter4change.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/080420-c4c-covid-cbpf-localization-lobby-brief-final.pdf>

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International Council of Voluntary Agencies (2023) *ICVA HFWG Retreat Outcomes on Pooled Funding and Data Transparency*. Contact Manon Glaser manon.glaser@icvanetwork.org for a copy.

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (2023) *Lessons Learned Exercise: Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa Report*. Contact Manon Glaser manon.glaser@icvanetwork.org for a copy.

Mårtendal, J. (2022) *Enhancing Quality Financing for Local Peacebuilding Through Pooled Funds*. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. Available at: <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/dhf-dd-paper-no31-enhancing-qualityfinancing-for-local-peacebuilding-funds.pdf>

Obrecht, A. (2019) *Shifting Mindsets: Creating a More Flexible Humanitarian Response*. ALNAP. Available at: <https://library.alnap.org/help-library/shifting-mindsets-creating-a-more-flexible-humanitarian-response>

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Pearson, M. (2022) *Are Pooled Funds a Driver of Localisation?* Available at: <https://humanitarianfundingforecast.org/stories-localisation-cbpf/>

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United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (2022) *Background Paper—UN Inter-Agency Pooled Funds*. Available at: https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/stakeholder_forum_background_paper_2022.pdf

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