



Analytical Report

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OPPORTUNITIES AND THE ROLE OF COUNTRY-BASED POOLED FUNDS (CBPFs)

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Capacity Strengthening Opportunities and the Role of Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)

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Executive summary

Despite the recognition of their central role in humanitarian responses, national and local actors' access to funding is still restricted. Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) are currently an increasing source of direct funding to national and local humanitarian responders, and their current reach could be leveraged to expand funding access to other local actors and improve the assistance delivered by local and national responders. This is particularly so considering the expected increase in the overall CBPFs funding base. In the 'Agenda for Humanity', the UN Secretary-General has called for an increase in the overall proportion of humanitarian appeal funding channelled through CBPFs, to 15 per cent by 2018. Based on the experience of CBPFs, strengthening the humanitarian capacities of national and local responders, where necessary - including their organisational capacities and financial accountability - can be key to ensuring that they are able to expand their access to funding.

A mapping exercise was carried out with the aim of providing an overview of existing resources for national and local actors, and to help clarify the role CBPFs can play in supporting national and local actors to better access CBPFs' funding. Taking the offer of self-identified opportunities for capacity development as a point of departure, the exercise has focused mostly at the global level. It is understood, for example, that there could be different south-to-south and 'home-grown' opportunities, but these remain more obscure and would require specifically dedicated studies. The exercise has nonetheless revealed a wealth of

opportunities meant to strengthen humanitarian capacities. Though only focusing at the global level, it is already possible to acknowledge that certain of these opportunities are targeting national and local actors specifically. As many can still be categorised as training initiatives targeting functional skills, other approaches, which combine coaching and mentoring techniques, are also visible. Capacity development of national and local actors is moving away from simply training opportunities to initiatives that include a broader assessment of the humanitarian capacities needed in each response, including better evidence of what these may be. The level of accessibility, however, varies from a few free online resources and platforms to member-based support and commercial/fee-based opportunities.

Feedback from CBPFs in Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Turkey has highlighted capacity gaps of national and local partners in financial management and governance-related issues but also a lack of familiarity with the workings of the international humanitarian system and its architecture. CBPFs can better capitalise on opportunities and initiatives already happening at the global and country levels, including through some of the mechanisms put in place by the international humanitarian system through the clusters. In this sense, better and consistent clarity across the different CBPFs as to the limits of their support to partners would be beneficial. At the same time, OCHA should not underestimate the indirect learning benefits CBPF partners may reap by being able to interact directly with the different structures and mechanisms composing the international humanitarian system.



Introduction

The role of national and local actors in preparing and responding to crises has been increasingly recognised in recent years. Advocates for their greater inclusion within the broader humanitarian system have highlighted how not only their knowledge of the context can allow for more effective and appropriate responses, their work across the spectrum of humanitarian and development programmes can also be beneficial in ensuring greater interconnectedness. Most recently, the World Humanitarian Summit called for humanitarian aid to be locally driven. Yet, as witnessed by one of the core commitments of the Grand Bargain – more support and funding tools for local and national responders – national and local actors only receive a small percentage of humanitarian aid.

According to financial data,¹ an increasing source of direct funding to national and local responders is currently represented by Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs). These funds, managed by OCHA, are a cornerstone of the humanitarian reform and strive to fund those actors best placed to deliver assistance in accordance with the priorities identified in Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs). In 2016, CBPFs allocated US\$714 million, close to 64 per cent of their funding to NGOs (including close to 18 per cent to national and local NGOs). The current reach of CBPFs with national and local actors could be leveraged to expand funding access to

other local actors and improve the assistance delivered by local and national responders. This is particularly so, considering an expected increase in the overall CBPFs funding base. In its Agenda for Humanity, the UN Secretary-General has called for an increase in the overall proportion of humanitarian appeal funding channelled through CBPFs to 15 per cent by 2018.

For national and local actors to access more equitably existing sources of humanitarian aid, including CBPF funding, concurrent investments in building and/or strengthening national and local capacities are an important element. Based on CBPF's experience, strengthening the humanitarian capacities of national and local responders, where necessary - including their organisational capacities and financial accountability - can be key to ensure that they are able to expand their access to funding. OCHA, for example, was able to increase the share of CBPF funding to national and local NGOs as a result – among others – of improved risk management in the field and at headquarters, including the implementation of much more robust accountability frameworks and risk management systems on the ground. Risk management, however, does not automatically translate into strengthened humanitarian national and local actors.

Technical assistance – in its many different forms – plays an important role in strengthening humanitarian capacities. With an increased focus on the value of locally-led responses, targeted

¹ See Development Initiatives (2016), Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016, p. 70. Available at <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GHA-report-2016-full-report.pdf>.

opportunities to better enable national and local actors as humanitarian responders have also seen the light recently. Recognising the role currently played by CBPFs in enabling access of national and local actors to humanitarian funding and the limits of its coordination mandate, the Funding Coordination Section (FCS) at OCHA commissioned a mapping exercise of current capacity strengthening opportunities for national and local actors at the global level. The results of the mapping are meant to provide an overview of existing resources for national and local actors and to help clarify the role CBPFs can play in supporting national and local actors better access CBPFs funding.

The present report complements the separate mapping exercise by outlining and presenting a brief analysis of its main findings. In an effort to ground the findings from the mapping in the country-specific experience of CBPFs, this report also includes a few insights from selected CBPFs. The mapping exercise was not intended to be exhaustive. It was rather meant to provide a first snapshot that would help inform further discussions and guide decision making towards the kind of approach which OCHA could take regarding the capacity strengthening² of national and local partners to facilitate their access to CBPF funds. The exercise aimed to provide an overview of many of the capacity-strengthening opportunities available. In view of the timeframe of the study, however, and the vast scope of the everchanging capacity-strengthening

landscape, it undoubtedly does not cover all those that exist.

Thanks to those who took the time to provide their views, insights, and feedback. The views contained in the study should not be attributed to OCHA. Any errors are the sole responsibility of the consultant.

Methodology and limitations

How the search/mapping was carried out

The objective of the mapping exercise was to understand and identify the different capacity strengthening opportunities currently available for national and local actors with a specific focus on humanitarian capacities. Opportunities were identified through:

- Google searches based on key search-terms, which are provided in Annex 1.
- Interviews with key stakeholders. In total, 24 interviews were held with representatives of non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, donor representatives and selected CBPFs Fund Managers. The list of people contacted for the mapping can be found in Annex 2.

'Filters' / Analytical framework

To lay the foundations of the mapping exercise, the Humanitarian Programme Cycle was used as a reference to build appropriate categories for capacity strengthening, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

² The terms 'capacity strengthening' and 'capacity development' are used interchangeably in this paper.



Figure 1: Analytical framework for identifying capacity strengthening opportunities

Given the alignment of CBPFs in supporting the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, this analytical framework has attempted to provide a practical take on the linkages between the humanitarian programme cycle and the capacities needed across the different steps of the cycle. As a cross-cutting and foundational basis of humanitarian work, a focus on capacity strengthening opportunities on humanitarian principles was also included.

The capacity strengthening opportunities identified through a general mapping were then appropriately filtered. Opportunities

that met the following criteria were included:

1. Level – the focus is on the strengthening of organisational/institutional frameworks. While this may target specific skills of individuals, these are seen in the context of a specific institutional need.
2. Scope – the opportunities cover humanitarian-specific or cross-cutting issues.
3. Target audience – national and local actors are specifically targeted or could benefit from opportunities broadly targeting humanitarian actors.
4. Language – Focus on English and French opportunities and Arabic as much as possible.³

Opportunities were initially classified according to the humanitarian programme cycle but additional categories/filters were added as the research progressed. These include for example the level of accessibility, whether the initiative targets individual or institutional competencies and their duration (short-term or long-term opportunities).

Limitations

As with all mapping exercises, the results obtained provide only a snapshot of what capacity strengthening opportunities may exist in different contexts. Those opportunities that are ‘advertising’ themselves better, naturally get more attention. The mapping includes opportunities that are ‘self-labelled’ as capacity strengthening or capacity development, or generally promote

³ Availability of programmes in other languages is highlighted as appropriate.

increased knowledge/skills of humanitarian actors (including national and local actors) and may have missed those that are not advertised as such. The mapping does not include, for example, informal approaches – peer-to-peer support, networking, etc. - to capacity strengthening that may be happening at the micro-level. The mapping exercise favoured an ‘all-in’ approach: those opportunities that met the criteria were included in the results. There was no review of the quality of each initiative.

Considering the scope of the mapping exercise, most of the results focus on global-level opportunities that may be available in specific countries or regions as well. Specific examples of technical assistance provided by the clusters, for example, are not included. And while attempts were made to explore south-to-south opportunities, these remain more obscure and the mapping results therefore present a gap in this area. In particular, it is clear from previous studies⁴ that many countries are/have been developing a ‘home-grown’ support capacity (known as local capacity developers -LCD) consisting of training and research institutes, leading NGOs and consultancy firms or independent consultants. To be able to fully understand the scope of such offerings in each of the countries where CBPFs are active would have required,

however, an in-depth study into each one of them separately.

Finally, the exercise was carried out from a ‘supply’ perspective. It was not meant to explore whether the opportunities available are in line with the self-assessed capacity needs of national and local actors themselves. On a country-level, contacts were privileged with selected CBPFs Fund Managers to better understand how the results of the mapping could be better aligned with their role and experience. Feedback from national and local actors will need to be factored in when developing further thinking on some of the conclusions from this exercise.

Capacity development: from theory to practice

The diverse terminology in use to refer to capacity development – ‘capacity building’, ‘capacity strengthening’, ‘capacity investment’ – reflects the wealth of thinking on the subject and the abundance of approaches to it. Each organisation will shape its definition of capacity development on the basis of its principles, vision, and mission, its history, and analysis of its own capacities.⁵ For some, capacity development is both an approach – e.g. focus is on shared commitments and objectives – and a set of activities – e.g.

⁴ See, Tembo (2008), *Study on capacity development support initiatives and patterns. LCDF research and development phase*, ODI. Available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/3490.pdf> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

⁵ Cf. Eade, D. (1997), *Capacity-Building. An Approach to People-Centered Development*. Oxfam. Available at <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/capacity-building-an-approach-to-people-centred-development-122906> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

technical support, advisory services, training initiatives.⁶ Eade (1997) generally divides capacity development into three different categories according to their purpose: as a means to an end; as an end in itself; and as a process of adaptation to change.⁷ In the case of the first, the focus will likely be on improving the links between the different components of an organisation and the quantity and quality of its outputs and results. If capacity development is an end in itself, the focus will likely be in ensuring that the organisation's mission is appropriate and adequate to improve its representation within civil society and its ability to influence socio-political processes. Finally, when capacity development is viewed as a process of adaptation to change, the focus will likely be on "on assisting the counterpart to become a more self-reliant and autonomous actor within a long-term alliance or 'critical accompaniment' with the donor and other relevant agencies".⁸ Organisations may pursue the three purposes concurrently as there may be only a different emphasis put on one or the other.

Capacity development and the strengthening of national institutions and actors has been a long-standing feature of international development plans. In an effort to clarify what the concept may englobe, UNDP, for example, has sought to

define capacity development as "the ways to the means" or "the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time".⁹ It is about empowering and strengthening endogenous capacities – those of individuals, leaders, organisations and societies. The value of local ownership and capacity is recognised and seen as an essential asset towards achieving sustainable development and better aid effectiveness.¹⁰ Long-term national capacity development through institution building, human resource development and confidence-building among national actors is also seen as key to sustaining peace.¹¹

In recent years, humanitarian practitioners and policy-makers have also increasingly called for a better recognition and support of and to the role played by national/local actors in humanitarian responses. Whether because the international capacity to respond is being stretched to its limits or because of their better contextual knowledge and acceptance by affected communities, arguments in favour of empowering local partners and communities to be at the forefront of humanitarian response have gained

⁶ Cf. UNHCR (1999), A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/partners/3bbd64845/practical-guide-capacity-building-feature-unhcrs-humanitarian-programmes.html> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

⁷ Eade, D. (1997), *Capacity-Building. An Approach to People-Centered Development*. Oxfam, pp. 34-35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/capacity-development-a-undp-primer/CDG_PrimerReport_final_web.pdf.

¹⁰ https://www.interaction.org/files/FABB%202013_Sec06_PolicyBrief_BuildingLocalCapacity.pdf.

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12465.doc.htm>.

momentum.¹² Grounding humanitarian action in local capacities, resources and realities is one of the clearest calls issued in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit. And yet, capacity development is not as an established feature in humanitarian responses as it may be the case in international development plans. It is mostly a piecemeal approach. A few organisations have consistently invested over the years in building the humanitarian capacity of national and local actors, out of either their partnership approach or their vision and operational implementation modalities.¹³

Different factors are used to explain the “less-than-expected” results in enhancing national and local humanitarian action up to these days.¹⁴ Many of these are traced back to the international humanitarian architecture, which may support interests at conflict with the localisation agenda. Others are linked to the competition for funding among all humanitarian actors and current funding structures which can be at odds with long-term capacity development needs.¹⁵ Weighing programmatic and institutional risks has also often contributed to shy investments in the capacities of national and local actors, as working with local partners is often seen in

the humanitarian sector as more ‘risky’ than direct implementation.¹⁶

Christoplos (2004) provides an interesting critical review of the outcomes of capacity development investments in local institutional capacities by the humanitarian sector. Christoplos concludes that to fully appreciate the limits and opportunities of capacity development, “it is necessary to accept the different needs and goals of different stakeholders in capacity building”.¹⁷ If capacity development is to be more than just an add-on to the humanitarian agenda, a careful analysis of what could be strengthened should be undertaken. Christoplos also argues that while local communities are the first to support disaster-affected groups, this does not mean that their capacities can always be “reinforced, expanded or made sustainable”.¹⁸ A review of what has worked and what has not and a particular attention to each individual context will always be essential.

Results of the mapping

The search identified a total of 178 opportunities from 97 organisations

¹² https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf; <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Humanitarian%20Effectiveness%20-%20Scoping%20paper.pdf>; <http://ifrc-media.org/interactive/world-humanitarian-summit-2016/whs-2016-complimentarity/>

¹³ See for example, UNHCR (1999), *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR’s Humanitarian Programmes*; or CAFOD (2016), *Strengthening Capacities: CAFOD’s vision to promote locally-led humanitarian response*. Available at <http://bit.ly/2fnO5IE> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

¹⁴ http://www.icha.net/media/pdf/665_9720.pdf.

¹⁵ http://www.cerahgeneve.ch/files/6814/5042/8912/MAS_2014-2015_Henri_Nzeyimana_MAS_Dissertation_Final_Version_For_Publication_02112015.pdf.

¹⁶ <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/building-the-future-of-humanitarian-aid.pdf>.

¹⁷ Christoplos, I. (2004), *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004. Chapter 2. Institutional Capacity Building Amid Humanitarian Action*, p. 61. Available at <http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/rha04-ch2.pdf> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

and/or providers. Below is an analytical breakdown of the different opportunities.

Review of existing capacity-strengthening opportunities

The search did not only look at training opportunities, but took a broader perspective when looking up capacity-strengthening opportunities. It built mostly on what initiatives themselves identified as capacity development. In general, though, as highlighted in Figure 2 below, most of the opportunities identified still fall under the category of workshops, courses and training.

From an accessibility perspective, e-learning opportunities seem to be the ones requiring the least barriers to entry (except a reliable internet connection and dependent on language availability). Courses and workshops were generally categorised with a medium score, because of limited location opportunities, fees and maximum number of participants allowed per session. It is worth noting that very few training materials –were made available for free online.¹⁹ Providing only training materials seems an interesting way to make organisations take ownership of their own learning paths along context-specific needs, while still ensuring certain lowest common denominators.

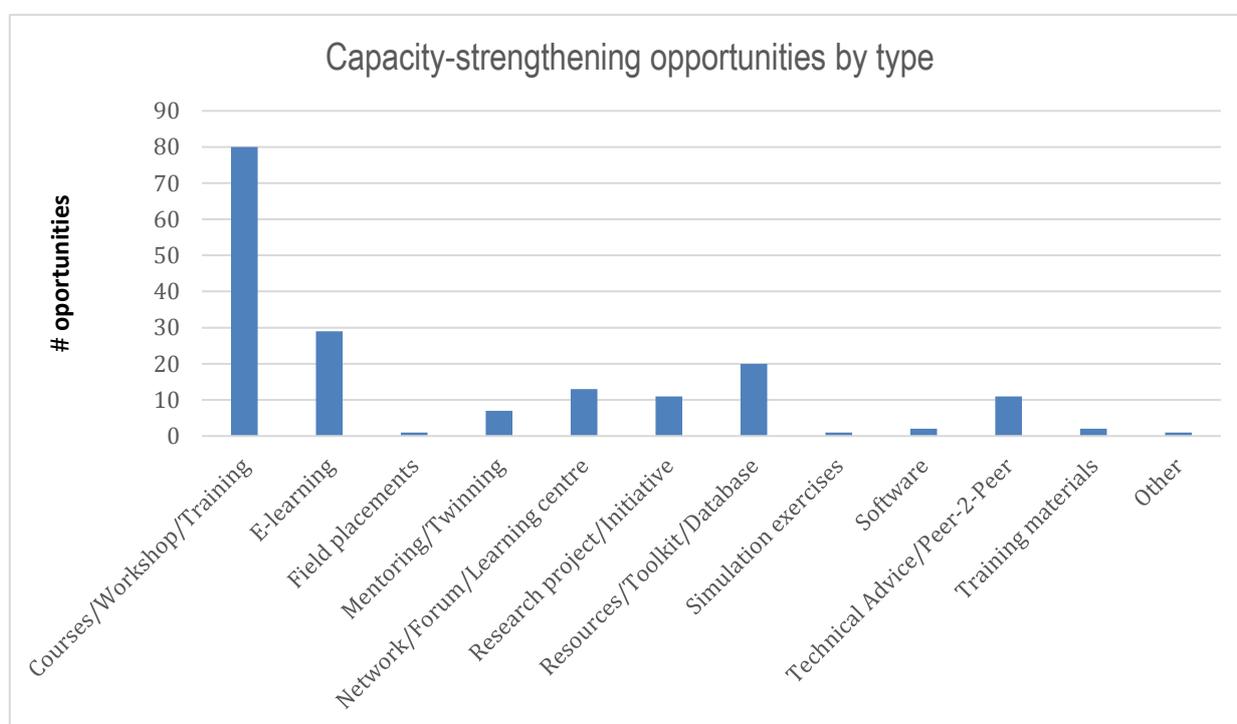


Figure 2: Results by type of opportunity

¹⁹ Because of their free availability online, these have been categorized as highly accessible.

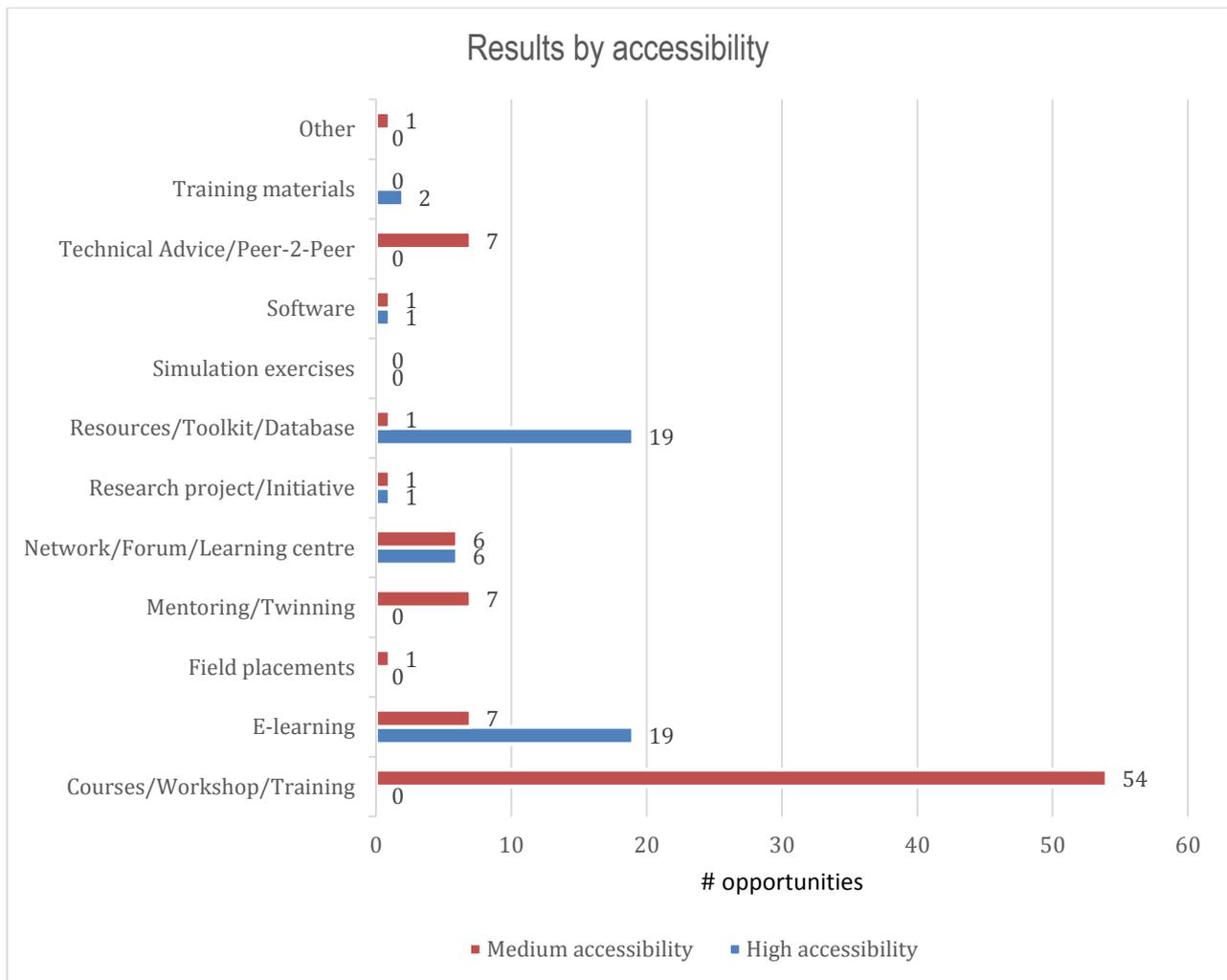


Figure 3: Results by accessibility

In line with other similar past mapping exercises,²⁰ most opportunities do not address specific technical²¹ areas, but rather target functional skills. Most training activities in fact focus on monitoring and evaluation, needs assessment and project management competencies more generally. While there are some technical training opportunities, these appear to be uneven by field: more opportunities were found in the fields of healthcare and logistics.²² On other hand, very few initiatives focus solely on humanitarian principles.

Examples of a broader approach to capacity development for national and local partners were also found. These generally take the national/local partners' self-assessments as a starting point to design tailored approaches. In these cases, quite often, a focus on humanitarian principles is also included in the broader competencies essential in humanitarian responses.

²⁰ Cf. Dalberg (2016), *Global Learning Landscape for the Humanitarian Sector*. Humanitarian Leadership Academy. Available at <http://bit.ly/2IGxsez> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

²¹ These results do not take into account specific support that the clusters may provide in-country.

²² Including pharmaceutical logistics and supply chain management.

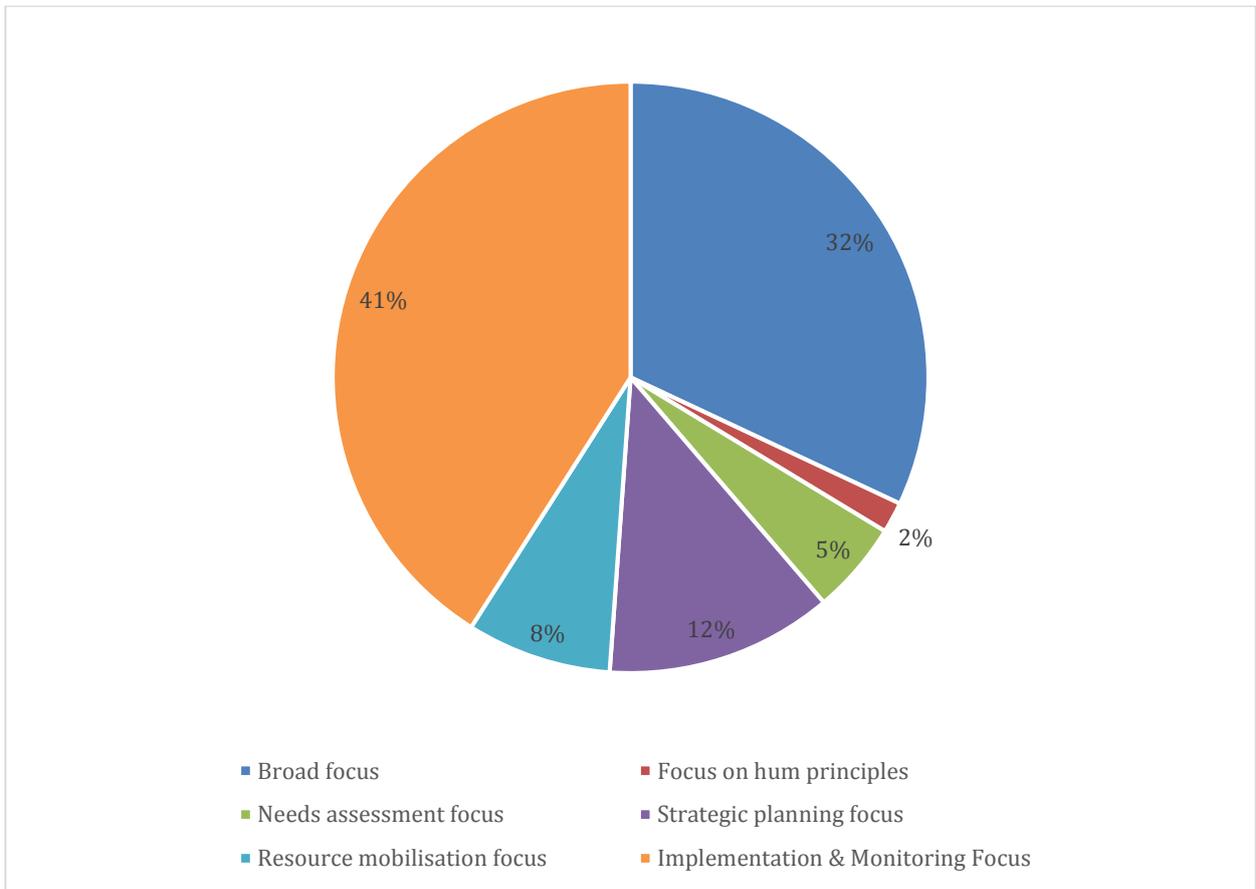


Figure 4: Opportunities by focus

Inherent to a mapping that has unearthed few country-specific opportunities, most of the ones found are in English. The label

multiple refers to more than three languages including English.

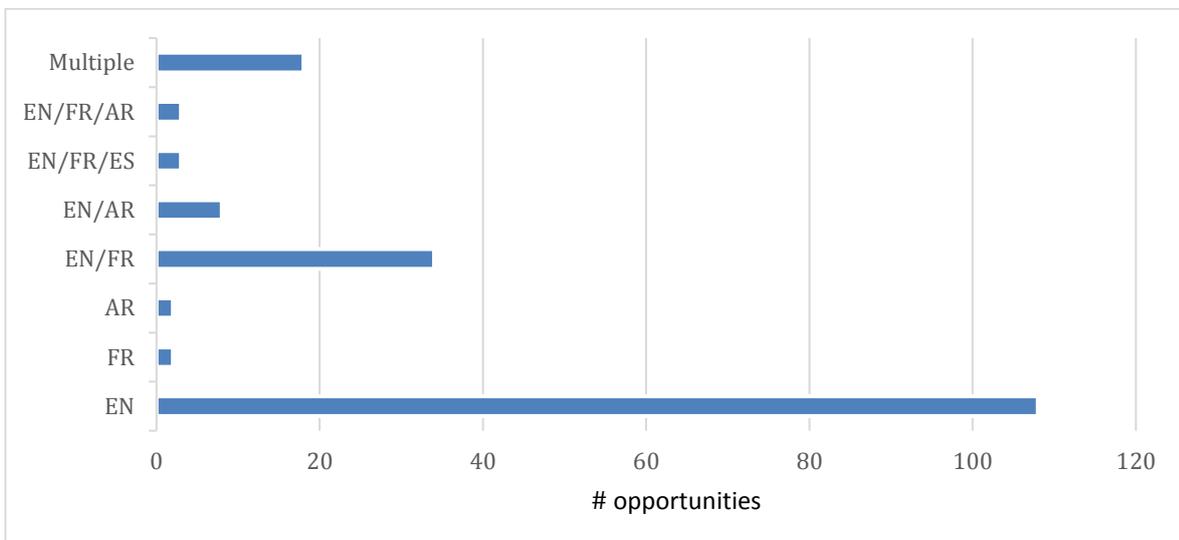


Figure 5: Opportunities by language

General considerations

The mapping exercise highlighted a lack of precise common definitions or conceptual approaches to capacity development. While capacity development may be more clearly articulated at the project level for most of the initiatives, it is difficult to distil specific common conceptual approaches from a first-level analysis. Some indications can nonetheless be gleaned from the underlying vision of those capacity development programmes with a broad competency focus.²³ These in fact privilege flexibility and self-determination by partners and national/local organisations themselves over what is defined as a “journey of organisational change”.²⁴ Notable in this regard is the planned ODI/HPG’s research initiative that, taking a step back, aims to clarify how capacity is understood in humanitarian contexts; to develop a picture of what capacity exists among local, national and international actors in specific contexts; and to understand what incentives promote or inhibit better complementarity between national and international actors.²⁵

Insights from selected Country-Based Pooled Funds

Selected contexts were included in the exercise in order to anchor the results of the mapping in the specific experience of the CBPFs. In particular, as there is no consolidated overview yet of capacity gaps identified by the CBPFs through the Partner Capacity Assessment (PCA), this was also an opportunity to gauge possible alignments between opportunities available and CBPFs-driven needs. The insights presented in this section are based on interviews with Fund Managers from Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Turkey. These funds were included both for their experience in partnering with national and local NGOs and to gain insights from a geographically-diverse group, and for pragmatic reasons – the Fund Managers from these countries were available to share their experience at the time of the exercise. The interviews largely aimed to address three main areas of investigation:

1. National and local humanitarian actors: type, gaps assessed through PCAs
2. Capacity strengthening opportunities: global-local, local-local, examples of success stories; systemic challenges

²³ For example, the NEAR Network, Oxfam’s ELNHA programme and CAFOD’s Humanitarian Capacity Development.

²⁴ Bhardwaj, R., Cohen, T. (2016), *Strengthening Capacities: CAFOD’s vision to promote locally-led humanitarian response*, p.2. Available at <http://bit.ly/2fnO5IE> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

²⁵ More details can be found at ODI/HPG (2017), *HPG Integrated Programme 2017-2019. From the ground up: understanding local response in crises*. Available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/project-document/11355.pdf> (last accessed: 28 March 2017).

3. Role of CBPFs: role played by CBPFs vis-à-vis national and local humanitarian actors so far; thoughts about their future role

The question as to what type of national and local actors CBPFs partner with is particularly topical given discussions around the localisation marker to help with the implementation of the commitments included in the Grand Bargain. It will be particularly important in fact to ensure there is conceptual clarity regarding ‘what is a national or local responder’ to whom the 25 per cent target specified in the Grand Bargain should apply.²⁶ For the purpose of this exercise, the question sought to understand the level of heterogeneity in the group of national and local partners CBPFs work with and the potential types of relationships this leads to.

While touching on the questions highlighted above, conversations with the Fund Managers mostly highlighted some broader issues around the relationship of CBPFs with national and local partners. The interviews provided only a glimpse of the daily experience of the Funds and the questions highlighted above. The insights presented in this section do not pretend to be exhaustive and comprehensive of all the issues that CBPFs and their national and local partners may be confronted with.

CBPFs’ mission

Since the first Emergency Response Fund (ERF) was established in Angola in 1995, OCHA has managed more than 20 different CBPFs. These have been instrumental in establishing the link between the reform priorities of the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Initiative and the 2012 IASC-led

A FEW BASIC FACTS

Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Fund – established in 2014, managed by OCHA and administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It allocated close to \$40 million in 2016, 69% of which was allocated to 60 NGO projects, which included \$6.6 million (16%) for 16 local NGO projects (compared to \$1.5 million (4%) for 4 local NGO projects in 2015).

Somalia Humanitarian Fund – previously established as the Common Humanitarian Fund in 2010, managed by OCHA and administered by the MPTF Office of UNDP. It allocated around \$30 million in 2016, granting mostly to NGOs (\$20 million, out of which \$4.6 million to local NGOs (15%).

South Sudan Humanitarian Fund – established in 2012, managed by OCHA and administered by the MPTF Office of UNDP. It allocated more than \$82 million in 2016, with \$40 million allocated to NGOs, including \$9.9 million to local NGOs (12%).

Turkey Humanitarian Fund – established in 2014 and managed and administered by OCHA. It allocated close to \$105 million in 2016, including nearly \$69 million to NGOs of which over \$31 million went to local NGOs (30%).

²⁶ Cf. IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team (2016), Draft Definitions paper.

Transformative Agenda and operational changes on the ground. CBPFs, in fact, “allocate funding based on identified humanitarian needs and priorities at the country level in line with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)”.²⁷ In particular, CBPFs are expected to:²⁸

1. Improve effectiveness of the humanitarian response by directing funding towards priority humanitarian needs. Priority needs are identified through an inclusive and participatory process, which includes national actors (e.g. NGOs).

2. Strengthen the leadership of the HC, while leveraging his/her humanitarian coordination role.

3. Mobilize resources and support coordination as part of the humanitarian planning framework (HRP/HPC).

These are generally the objectives for all CBPFs, including the Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Turkey Humanitarian Funds. Considering the specificities of the Syria humanitarian response and support to cross-border operations, the Turkey Humanitarian Fund has highlighted an additional long-term aim, that of building the capacity of Syrian NGOs. Priority is in this case given to funding projects of Syrian National NGOs.

In its Vision Paper for CBPFs, OCHA sees expanding partnerships with local actors as instrumental in ensuring that relief is delivered to people affected by conflicts and natural disasters in a quicker and more efficient way through the CBPFs.²⁹ In both the Vision Paper and the 2015 Policy Instruction, OCHA’s commitment to strengthening partnerships with national actors is formulated as a commitment to supporting NGOs “in developing their capacity to become eligible recipients of CBPF funding”³⁰ and developing “specific training to strengthen NGO capacity for project delivery and management”.³¹ The Operational Handbook for Country-Based Pooled Funds, however, does not provide any further guidance on this.

In an effort to guide Fund managers, OCHA FCS has repeatedly communicated that capacity strengthening should be limited to enabling partners’ access to CBPF and should not target broader humanitarian competencies. Each Fund then adapts its support to NGOs, including national and local ones, according to its own specificities. While it may be largely clear that capacity development of national and local partners is not part of the CBPFs’ mission, the operationalisation of the commitment to support NGOs in developing their capacities to become CBPFs partners remains to be clarified.

²⁷ UN OCHA (2015), *Policy Instruction. Country-Based Pooled Funds*, para. 4.2.2. Available at <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Policy%20Instruction%20on%20OCHA%20CBPFs.pdf> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 4.2.3.

²⁹ UN OCHA (2014), *Vision Paper: OCHA Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and Beyond*. Available at <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Vision%20Paper%20on%20OCHA,%20CBPF%20and%20beyond.pdf> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

³⁰ UN OCHA (2015), *Policy Instruction. Country-Based Pooled Funds*, para. 4.3.1.

³¹ UN OCHA (2014), *Vision Paper: OCHA Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and Beyond*, p. 3.

Conversations with selected Fund Managers has pointed to confusion and differing views as to each Fund's expected results on this.

Balancing risk management and capacity development

Key to discharging their mission and a tool to help identify potential capacity needs, partner capacity assessments (PCAs) are used to determine "whether the NGO has a sufficient level of capacity in terms of institutional, managerial, financial and technical expertise"³² to receive CBPF funding. The eligibility process is two-step, involving both a due diligence exercise and the PCA. Depending on the context, PCAs may be done through the use of proxy indicators for partners' capacity or as a fully-fledged capacity assessment exercise. Assessments reflect the capacity of a partner at one particular point in time and are generally supported by performance management and monitoring measures.

Channelling funding in high-risk environments, the Humanitarian Funds need to balance their mandate in supporting country-specific humanitarian response plans and accountability to affected populations with vertical accountability to the donors that

contribute to each of the Funds and determine their success. OCHA has therefore put in place a risk-management framework of which PCAs are an integral part. Assessments largely focus on functional competencies, such as governance and institutional capacity, project and programme management, financial management, monitoring and evaluation. The capacity of the partner determines the risk that a CBPF faces in funding a specific project, which in turn influences how each grant is managed and accountability exercised. This is particularly relevant when exploring the relationship of Humanitarian Funds with national and local actors.

Direct funding to national and local actors has increased in recent years³³. The results of capacity assessments and monitoring measures, however, have also meant a decrease in the number of national and local partners in a couple of instances. In Somalia, for example, the Humanitarian Fund went from 74 national partners between 2010 and 2013 to 38 in 2014, 37 in 2016, but is increasing to 60 by mid-2017.³⁴ In the case of the Turkey Humanitarian Fund, as a percentage of the overall funding, the amount to national NGOs decreased in 2016³⁵. This was due,

³² UN OCHA (2015), *Operational Handbook for Country-Based Pooled Funds*, para. 143. Available at <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OperationalHandbook.pdf> (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

³³ In Afghanistan, for example, the Humanitarian Fund went from 11 eligible national partners in 2014 to 33 by February 2017. This is in recognition of OCHA's attempt to promote the engagement of local NGOs in the programming and delivery of CBPF-funded projects, making sure CBPF allocation processes are inclusive enough to collectively identify and partner with the best positioned and most capable responding actors (which are very frequently national NGOs).

³⁴ Based on information received directly from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund. The Fund conducted the first comprehensive capacity assessment in 2013 when 45 partners, national and international, didn't pass the assessment. The number of national partners is increasing in 2017 as the second major capacity assessment round is concluding.

³⁵ In terms of absolute funding, however, the figures have recorded an increase. Based on information shared by the Turkey Humanitarian Fund.

for example, to the indirect impact of fraud allegations and consequent investigations into the procurement practices of international NGOs. The consequence was to invest into pipelines, which were considered less risky: national NGOs could access the goods that needed to be delivered, but they received less direct funding, since grants for the procurement of those goods were allocated to UN agencies.

It is not always possible to identify trends from the results of capacity assessments and these may not be always available in aggregate form. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Funds' experience highlights gaps in financial management and governance-related issues, such as an organisation's vision and long-term strategy. In Afghanistan, for example, common issues identified through the Due Diligence Review include the lack of relevant HR and financial policies, conflicts in the organisational structure and lack of clarity regarding their geographical coverage. The Turkey Humanitarian Fund has also highlighted needs in technical areas and more generally on the engagement of the NGOs with the workings of the international humanitarian system and its architecture.

A move from a control-based to a risk-management approach in high-risk

environments has been praised as an opportunity to better partner with NGOs, including national and local ones, to address the high and urgent humanitarian needs of local populations³⁶. PCAs represent an opportunity to identify the capacity gaps and strengths of CBPFs partners. The assessment process and its consequent recommendations provide guidance as to what improvements are necessary to become CBPFs partners. In the case of the Afghanistan CHF, for example, feedback from national NGOs on the CHF Eligibility Process has been constructive and has been translated into more comprehensive partnerships for capacity development to enable an increasing participation of national NGOs in the CHF³⁷. In South Sudan, in 2015-16, OCHA supported national NGOs to better understand and engage with the humanitarian coordination system. Several briefings and orientation sessions were also conducted about the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund, with workshops around the project cycle, the grant management system and the online project/planning systems. Experience from South Sudan has shown that this type of support with a wider remit than just the CBPF is important, as national partners are able to more meaningfully engage with the Fund, the clusters and the other parts of

³⁶ See for example, ICVA (2015), *Partner Capacity Assessments of Humanitarian NGOs. Fit for Purpose?*. Available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Partner_Capacity_Assessments%20of%20Humanitarian%20NGOs%20Fit%20for%20purpose.pdf.

³⁷ A clear example of this is the Twinning Programme implemented by Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) which specifically targets national NGOs that have not successfully completed the CHF Eligibility Process and teams them up with participating international partners. The key objectives of the Twinning programme are to increase national NGO participation in the clusters, build national NGO capacity to access the CHF and other humanitarian funds, and to ensure all organisations involved follow international humanitarian principles.

the system once they are more familiar with the wider coordination architecture.

Tensions and opportunities

The lack of clarity around what CBPFs support to national and local actors may entail at the country level seems to have led in some instances to opposing views in countries where CBPFs are operational. On one hand, there are proponents of a different new approach which would involve staffing increases in the humanitarian financing units that would specifically support national and local partners in filling their capacity needs. On the other hand, a more purist approach seems to be found which advocates for no capacity development in the Fund's activities. The Turkey Humanitarian Fund offers an interesting example as an effort to strike a balance between the two and formalise the Fund's approach to capacity development.

As one of its strategic aims is the capacity development of Syrian national NGOs, the Turkey Humanitarian Fund has had a better opportunity to reflect on what its role could be. The Fund has identified four ways to support the capacity development of national partners, both directly and

indirectly.³⁸ Conversations with the Fund Managers from the Afghanistan, Somalia and South Sudan Humanitarian Funds have shown that they may each undertake any of the approaches highlighted above even if in different degrees and in a more informal way. These may be viewed as support to capacity development of national and local partners by some or as an opportunity to 'level the playing field' by others. Promoting partnerships can also be viewed as an element of the Funds' risk-management framework, including with the introduction of third-party monitoring options.³⁹

The underlying question is whether the support to national and local actors highlighted in the CBPFs' Vision Paper should refer to enabling better CBPFs partners or better national and local humanitarian responders. While the two are not mutually exclusive, there are substantial differences in the approach. Quoting Eade (1997)⁴⁰, enabling better CBPFs partners would entail capacity development to be seen as improving the links between the different components of an organisation and the quantity and quality of its outputs and results. In this case, it is clear that the priority for CBPFs is

³⁸ "1. Providing direct funding to Syrian NGOs through an Allocation process that includes coaching by the Fund and the Clusters; 2. Applying participatory capacity assessment methodologies to identify and address capacity needs of the partners and where relevant OCHA and the Fund can provide training; 3. Funding projects of UN agencies and INGO's with distinct and verifiable capacity building components targeting Syrian NGOs; 4. Support coordination of capacity building of National NGOs provided by other stakeholders including Clusters, Partnership Initiative, NGO Forum and its members" in Turkey Humanitarian Fund (undated), *Turkey Humanitarian Pooled Fund and Capacity Building of Syrian National NGOs*.

³⁹ Third-party monitoring can present both advantages – it could promote better partnerships between national/local and international NGOs, but also disadvantages – it can be a simply technical exercise which reinforces unbalanced power relations. A more in-depth analysis of the costs and benefits of third-party monitoring for national and local partners is, however, beyond the scope of this exercise.

⁴⁰ See Footnote 4 above.

to provide the necessary funds to life-saving activities and that connections can be made with others working to enable better humanitarian national responders more broadly. From a technical perspective, the clusters play an essential role. Links can also be made to discussions around ‘humanitarian readiness’ – ensuring that partners are ready at times of crisis – and to opportunities linking the localisation and the disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness agendas. It can be a practical opportunity to build on the complementarities of both humanitarian and development actors.⁴¹

UN agencies – with a development or humanitarian mandate or both - have long focused on strengthening the capacities of national and local actors albeit with different approaches. Support to the localisation agenda is now complemented in some cases with a different strategic approach to partnerships⁴² and an understanding of the need for a better harmonised approach both at HQ and at country-level. Acknowledging their unique role in engaging with civil society, UN agencies together with the UN Resident Coordinator can all contribute to strengthen the capacities of national and local partners. In general, where the Resident Coordinator is designated as Humanitarian Coordinator in that country there may be clearer opportunities to connect humanitarian and development

efforts towards stronger national and local partners.

Similarly, the mapping exercise has pointed to a number of different initiatives led mostly by NGOs, which see humanitarian capacity development as a holistic undertaking and as an opportunity to rethink current partnership approaches. It is not only about organising training workshops but also about providing a more comprehensive support in line with the partners’ own needs. As highlighted in a study on partnerships with national Syrian NGOs, these “identified one-on-one meetings, on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching” and overall a more demand-driven and user-tailored approach “as the most effective means to build capacity”⁴³. CBPFs can better capitalise on opportunities and initiatives already happening at the global and at the country level and should not underestimate the support given to national and local partners because of their very own mission to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian response by directing funding towards inclusively and participatorily identified priority needs. As such, national and local CBPFs partners may reap indirect learning benefits by being able to interact directly with the different structures and mechanisms composing the international humanitarian system.

⁴¹ Reference can be made to the ‘new way of working’, meant to transcend the humanitarian-development divides and which is put forward in the UN Secretary-General’s report “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility” and its Agenda for Humanity.

⁴² See for example, WFP (2016), WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021). Available at http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp286743.pdf?_ga=1.87028944.993416379.1488815619 (last accessed: 2 March 2017).

⁴³ L2GP (2016), *Funding to national and local humanitarian actors in Syria: Between sub-contracting and partnerships*, p. 21. Available at http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_funding_Syria_May_2016.pdf (last accessed 3 March 2017).



Conclusion and recommendations

While the role of national and local actors in driving humanitarian responses in many areas was recognised as essential, much is still to be done to operationalise some of the systemic shifts agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit and through the Grand Bargain. OCHA's effort to better understand what role CBPFs can/should play in strengthening the capacities of national and local partners could not have been more timely. The results of the mapping exercise point to a wealth of opportunities meant to strengthen humanitarian capacities. Though only focusing at the global level, it is already possible to acknowledge that certain of these opportunities are targeting national and local actors specifically. As many can still be categorised as training initiatives targeting functional skills, other approaches, which combine coaching and mentoring techniques, are also visible. Capacity development of national and local actors is moving away from simply training opportunities to initiatives that include a broader assessment of the humanitarian capacities needed in each response, including better evidence of what these may be. While not all are equally accessible, OCHA can build on the results of the mapping exercise to identify opportunities that may be helpful to connect with.

What started as a simple mapping exercise to identify capacity-strengthening initiatives and opportunities for national and local humanitarian actors, however,

has also yielded in the end some interesting insights into the very international humanitarian system in which CBPFs operate.

Albeit it may be trivial to highlight, it is still important to remember that CBPFs do not operate in isolation. On the contrary, they are a function and an instrument of the international humanitarian system. Many of the challenges that national and local partners face in engaging with the system and accessing CBPFs funding are also largely dependent on the inherent incentives (or disincentives) of such a system. National and local representation on humanitarian country teams and clusters will directly impact, for example, national and local NGOs' ability to access funding. Donor behaviour and requirements will still impact, even if indirectly, vertical accountability measures for national and local actors. In the end, it cannot only be about the quantity of the funding going to national and local partners. It is also about the quality of the funding and the opportunities national and local partners will have to build sustainable organisations with a solid financial base.

Nonetheless, the mapping exercise and the conversations with the CBPFs Fund Managers also point to some practical questions that OCHA can address both internally and in consultation with its partners and donors. For OCHA, the results of the mapping and of the insights obtained from selected Humanitarian Funds, highlight the following areas for further consideration.

Building on existing opportunities

The mapping exercise has shown that there are several ongoing initiatives /

opportunities that are dedicated to strengthening the humanitarian capacities of national and local partners even beyond traditional support to civil society.

OCHA may consider building on existing opportunities in a number of different ways.

- > Based on an analysis of the outcomes of the PCA, OCHA should consistently highlight where there may be a need for capacity development, engaging in an honest feedback with partners. A consolidated review of the outcomes of the PCAs may provide useful insights as to capacity-development trends and needs in each context.
- > Starting with the results of the mapping exercise, the Funds / OCHA can act as a 'broker' between national and local partners and available opportunities. This may involve identifying a partner at the global level that allows for opportunities that are free of charge for national and local actors, are easily accessible and are provided in a variety of different languages. Work done by other UN agencies in mapping CSOs and capacity-development opportunities in specific countries could be leveraged where possible and appropriate.
- > OCHA can disseminate the results of the mapping exercise among partners and NGO networks both to highlight more broadly existing opportunities and to ensure that the exercise remains a living one, where other existing relevant opportunities can be added.
- > OCHA should be mindful of what needs national partners may

themselves highlight and build appropriate linkages with the outcomes from the PCAs – thus better understanding the overall 'demand' for capacity development needs.

- > CBPFs Advisory boards could be better leveraged to explore existing in-country opportunities for capacity development. Donors are encouraged to actively participate and share information of their contributions to initiatives in support of civil society through the Advisory Boards in countries where CBPFs are operational.

As a corollary to the main recommendations above and based on discussions with the Fund Managers, it is also worth highlighting that there may be an opportunity for OCHA to provide:

Better clarity on CBPFs' commitment to support NGOs to develop their capacities

Considering the current lack of operational guidance on what CBPFs' expected results in supporting national and local partners should be, OCHA may consider using the opportunity of the upcoming review of the Global Guidelines for CBPFs to clarify its commitment to support NGOs to develop their capacities to become CBPFs partners. There are certainly no silver bullets and no context-free recipes to capacity development. There are, however, some actions that could be undertaken to better support Fund Managers and drive better overall humanitarian outcomes in each context.

OCHA could:

- > Map existing practices in support of national and local partners across

CBPFs. The framework identified by the Turkey Humanitarian Fund could be used as a model to build on. A dedicated discussion among Fund Managers and FCS on this topic would be highly beneficial. A specific session at the yearly Fund Managers' meeting could be envisaged.

- > Clarify the boundaries of what CBPFs' direct support to national and local NGOs entails and better track the indirect learning benefits of enabling national and local partners to be exposed to the international humanitarian system. The three categories (capacity development as a means to an end, as an end in itself or as a process) can be a helpful starting point. In aligning with Humanitarian Response Plans, CBPFs are meant to support a collective response to prioritised needs. They are not designed to support individual humanitarian actors and capacity development is not part of their mission. De facto, Fund Managers support to varying degrees national and local partners throughout the funding cycle to enable them to be more effective in implementing humanitarian programmes (means to an end).

Annexes

Annex 1: Search terms⁴⁴

General terms Words added to 'capacity strengthening' or 'capacity development' or 'capacity building' or 'training' or 'course' or 'seminar'	Focus Words added to terms in Column 1
[none] 'humanitarian' 'national actors' 'local actors' 'national NGOs' 'local NGOs' 'forum' 'exchange'	'Needs Assessments' 'Information Management' 'Project Design' 'Programme Design' 'Humanitarian response' 'Strategic Planning' 'Leadership' 'Governance' 'Vision' 'Strategy' 'Resource Mobilisation' 'Fundraising' 'Advocacy' 'Communication' 'Coordination' 'Programme Implementation' 'Financial Management' 'Security' 'Logistics' 'Human Resources' or 'HR' 'Monitoring' 'M&E' 'MEAL' 'humanitarian principles'

⁴⁴ The search was also conducted in French.

Annex 2: Key informants

Name	Organization
Gwi-Yeop Son	OCHA
Melissa Pitotti	ICVA
Anne Street	CAFOD
Rhea Bhardwaj	CAFOD
Michael Mosselmans	Christian Aid
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Ben Garbutt / Charles Rowley	Oxfam
Petra Righetti	Oxfam Novib
Laura Jump / Atish Goncalves	Humanitarian Leadership Academy
Christina Bennett	ODI
Smruti Patel	Global Mentoring Initiative
Begona Birath-Barrientos	Sweden (SIDA)
Margaret Vincent / Rachel Kessler	UK Aid
Neil Patrick	UK Aid
Sara Baschetti	UNHCR
Marcus Prior	WFP
Andrea Suley	UNICEF
Taija Kontinen-Sharp / Barbara Krijgsman	UNDP
David Throp	South Sudan Humanitarian Fund
David White	Turkey Humanitarian Fund
Maia McFadden	Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) Afghanistan
Matija Kovac / Afifa Ismail	Somalia Humanitarian Fund
Elizabeth Whitehead	Fund Management Unit / UNDP Sudan
Marie Steadman / Asif Sherafi	ActionAid / Shifting the Power project