Management, Funding and Implementation of the Evaluation

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank the staff of the oPt Humanitarian Fund, OCHA, the Advisory Board members, clusters, partners and community members that engaged in this case study. We are grateful for the time and support they provided, and for the information and documentation they shared that has formed a key part of the analysis.

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Cover Photo: Aid workers helping farmers to plant seeds, GAZA, oPt. Credit: OCHA/Photographer: Fadi Zeyad Harouda.
Occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Report: Executive Summary

Evaluation purpose

1. The evaluation of Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) has two main purposes: to improve accountability and learning, and to examine the results of the humanitarian action supported by CBPFs between 2015 and 2018, with the purpose of drawing lessons on what has worked well. It will also identify challenges to their effective functioning in order to provide recommendations on how to continue to strengthen the CBPFs as a funding mechanism in support of timely, coordinated and principled humanitarian response for affected people.

2. The evaluation of the occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) is one of five country case studies. Two team members undertook a two-week trip to oPt, conducting interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, including with communities that had received oPt HF-funded assistance.

Summary of findings

3. The findings from this case study demonstrate that the oPt HF is a well-managed and efficient fund. The small team of national staff and UN Volunteers (UNVs) managed a tripling in donor contributions in 2018 without significant additional capacity. However, the HFU had hired a Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) officer and was in the process of hiring another. This is in order to maintain a robust risk management system as the HFU manages the significantly increased portfolio under implementation and closure following the 2018 scale-up.

4. The significant increase in donor contributions in 2018 was due to external factors rather than planned resource mobilization and the oPt HF does not have predictability around donor contributions. This led to a potential crisis in June 2019, when it did not have sufficient funds for a second Standard Allocation (SA). Although this was resolved by an unexpected and substantial donor contribution, this highlighted the need for a better understanding of donor decision-making processes and also more consistent engagement with a range of donors.

5. The oPt HF remained closely aligned to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) although partners were no longer required to have projects in the HRP to receive funding. The argument in support of this approach was that HRP requirements were reduced significantly in 2019. This meant that there was a risk that restricting funding to HRP projects could exclude funding for priority activities. The fund had also maintained the flexibility to respond to unforeseen needs through the relatively frequent use of Reserve Allocations. The oPt HF had contributed to strengthening cluster coordination as well as collaboration between different actors through the Advisory Board (AB) and during project development.

6. In a context of declining funding, the increase in contributions to the oPt HF enabled it to play an important and much appreciated role in the humanitarian response in 2018. Evidence from beneficiary consultations and other sources shows that the fund has made a difference to people’s lives in a variety of ways. In the West Bank, in particular, even projects that were not explicitly focused on protection had delivered protection benefits and given beneficiaries an important psychological boost. Unlike in many other contexts, beneficiaries were generally satisfied with partner engagement and communication. This was due in large part to NGO partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to identify beneficiaries, assess needs and ensure two-way communication with them.

7. The oPt HF benefitted from volunteer gender focal points across clusters, with the protection cluster focal point engaging actively in providing training and support as well as reviewing project proposals. It had also brought in a disability focal point to review proposals and as an observer on project review committees. While the focal points have helped to strengthen the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in oPt HF projects, they voluntarily took on the additional workload in addition to their jobs. This is not sustainable in the long term. The evaluation identified examples where oPt HF partners had responded to the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls, the elderly and Persons with Disabilities (PwD). It was also positive that the HFU focused on beneficiary selection and accountability mechanisms during its monitoring visits.

8. The oPt HF committed to providing direct funding to national and local NGOs (NNGOs) in 2011 and had put in place measures to ensure that NNGOs were prioritized in the proposal review process. Over the evaluation period, both
the number of NNGO projects funded and the volume of funding granted to NNGOs increased significantly. However, the oPt HF was explicit about selecting the best-placed partners based on their comparative advantage. In a context where NGOs face a range of restrictions, including campaigns to delegitimize them, and in light of the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, there are cases where international organizations are better placed to provide assistance.

9. The current Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) had been proactive in his leadership of the oPt HF and found it a useful mechanism to direct resources to key priorities in the HRP as well as to respond quickly to unforeseen emergencies such as violence related to the Great March of Return (GMR) in 2018. The Advisory Board (AB), which is unusual in having all donors to the fund as members as well as ECHO as an observer, played an appropriate role. It discussed a range of fund-related issues, including fund performance, partnerships and risk management. On a few occasions, it had disagreed with HC funding decisions but accepted that its role is advisory and that the HC is the final decision-maker.

10. The oPt context is characterized by the widespread infringement of rights and restrictions on both the local population and humanitarian actors. This makes the adherence to humanitarian principles vital but also difficult. The evaluation identified a number of ways in which the oPt HF contributes to supporting humanitarian principles and has put in place measures to reduce the risk of partners failing to abide by them.

11. In conclusion, the findings show that the oPt HF had been able to deliver ‘operational impact’ through timely, coordinated and principled assistance that made a difference to people's lives in an efficient and effective manner. The table below lists a number of targeted recommendations to help strengthen the oPt HF's operation.

### Recommendations for the oPt HF[1]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Responsible/Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong> OCHA should strengthen the resource mobilization strategy for the oPt HF to include a better understanding of donor decision-making processes and funding cycles so that it can engage with donors at the most opportune times. Also, the fund manager should be empowered to engage directly with donors to discuss operational issues (such as the scheduling of payments) and to respond to technical queries.</td>
<td>OCHA HoQ, HFU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Explanation:</strong> The significant increase in contributions to the oPt HF in 2018 was due to external factors rather than a concerted resource mobilization effort. The fund plays a demonstrably important role in the humanitarian response in oPt and OCHA could help to ensure more consistent funding levels if it engaged with donors when there is an opportunity to influence decisions (for example, when DFID is developing its next multi-year business case).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong> The HFU should work with cluster coordinators to provide consistent feedback to partners on projects that have not been selected for funding.</td>
<td>HFU, Cluster coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Explanation:</strong> NGO partners whose projects had not been funded expressed a strong desire for more detailed feedback on the reasons for the rejection so that they can learn and improve future applications. This would also increase the transparency of the funding allocation process and inspire more confidence that it is fair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong> Donors on the AB, together with the HC, should consider whether it is possible to secure general funding (outside the oPt HF) for cluster focal points for cross-cutting issues (gender, protection and disability) who could then review oPt HF proposals and support partners to improve how they mainstream these issues.</td>
<td>AB, HC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Explanation:</strong> The current system of volunteer focal points that take on the responsibility of reviewing projects and/or providing training and support in addition to their normal jobs is unsustainable in the long-term. These positions should be financed outside the oPt HF since they serve a system-wide function although the fund would also benefit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Please note that these recommendations are specific to the oPt HF. The team has deliberately limited the number of recommendations in order to make them useful and in response to feedback on the large number of recommendations in previous evaluations. Issues that have more general relevance across CBPFs and which will be addressed in the Global Synthesis Report are outlined in Section 6.2.
|   | Recommendation: Donors on the AB should make a concerted effort to work together, and with the HC, to address the barriers to the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance outlined in the report. This would benefit the oPt HF and its partners. Donors should also increase their funding to make it feasible to address humanitarian needs adequately (principles of humanity and impartiality). | AB, HC |
|---|---|
|   | Explanation: The crisis in oPt is ultimately a political crisis and it requires more collective action by the international community to address the issues that make it difficult for the oPt HF and its partners to deliver principled assistance. |   |
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<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>Accountability to Affected Populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Advisory Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDA</td>
<td>Association of International Development Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBPF</td>
<td>Country-Based Pooled Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPF</td>
<td>Common Performance Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>Emergency Relief Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERF</td>
<td>Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>FTS</td>
<td>Financial Tracking Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Gender with Age Marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Grand Bargain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHD</td>
<td>Good Humanitarian Donorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMR</td>
<td>Great March of Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMS</td>
<td>Grant Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCT</td>
<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFU</td>
<td>Humanitarian Financing Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNO</td>
<td>Humanitarian Needs Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoO</td>
<td>Head of Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Program Cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPF</td>
<td>Humanitarian Pooled Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Hebron Rehabilitation Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCG</td>
<td>Inter-Cluster Coordination Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>Israeli Defense Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;R</td>
<td>Monitoring and Reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>MHPSS</td>
<td>Mental Health and Psychosocial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNGO</td>
<td>National Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFWG</td>
<td>Pooled Fund Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNGO</td>
<td>Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEA</td>
<td>Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PwD</td>
<td>Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Reserve Allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Resident Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Rapid Response (CERF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRF</td>
<td>Rapid Response Fund (OFDA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Standard Allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>Strategic Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEGS</td>
<td>Strategy, Planning, Evaluation and Guidance Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>Strategic Review Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPH</td>
<td>Temporary International Presence in Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSCA</td>
<td>Temporary Shelter Cash Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFE</td>
<td>Underfunded Emergencies (CERF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNV</td>
<td>United Nations Volunteer</td>
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</table>
## Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>The Operational Handbook highlights that there are two types of accountabilities in relation to CBPFs. The first relates to the ability of CBPFs to achieve their objectives (as illustrated by the operational impact model) as humanitarian financing mechanisms. The second is of recipient organizations to deliver project results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability to affected populations</strong></td>
<td>Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organizations seek to assist. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has endorsed four commitments on AAP and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). These are described under the four headings of leadership, participation and partnership, information, feedback and action, and results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)</strong></td>
<td>Established in 2005 as the UN’s global emergency response fund, CERF pools contributions from donors around the world into a single fund allowing humanitarian responders to deliver lifesaving assistance whenever and wherever crises hit. CERF has a US$1 billion annual funding target and is fully un-earmarked to ensure funds go to meet the most urgent, lifesaving needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country-Based Pooled Funds</strong></td>
<td>CBPFs are established by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) when a new emergency occurs or when an existing humanitarian situation deteriorates. Contributions from donors are collected into single, un-earmarked funds to support local humanitarian efforts. Funds are directly available to a wide range of relief partners at the front lines of the response through an inclusive and transparent process in support of priorities set out in crisis-specific Humanitarian Response Plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanitarian action</strong></td>
<td>Humanitarian action comprises assistance, protection and advocacy in response to humanitarian needs resulting from natural hazards, armed conflict or other causes, or emergency response preparedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanitarian principles</strong></td>
<td>Underlining all humanitarian action are the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. These principles, derived from international humanitarian law, have been taken up by the United Nations in General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. Their global recognition and relevance are furthermore underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of promoting and respecting these principles within the framework of humanitarian assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Bargain</strong></td>
<td>The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. It includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organizations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years for people in need of humanitarian aid. These changes include gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders and cutting bureaucracy through harmonized reporting requirements.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Localization</th>
<th>Localizing humanitarian response is a process of recognizing, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses.[9]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational impact</td>
<td>The 2015 CBPF Policy Instruction defines operational impact as the provision of timely, coordinated, principled assistance to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity.[10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>According to the Operational Handbook, risk management aims to provide a specific set of decision-making tools to support the achievement of strategic outcomes in a transparent manner. Risk management includes risk identification, risk analysis and the development of mitigation strategies to manage residual risks. Partner risk management focuses on tailoring grant management procedures according to the capacity and performance of partners. Funding decisions should take into account risk analyses at both levels suggesting the appropriate assurance mechanisms. CBPF risk management procedures do not apply to UN agencies, only to other types of partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Introduction, approach and context

This section introduces the evaluation, provides a summary of the approach used for the case study and gives a brief background to the humanitarian situation and the occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF).

1.1. Introduction

12. This evaluation of Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) has two main purposes: to improve accountability and learning, and to examine the results of the humanitarian action supported by CBPFs between 2015 and 2018,[11] with the purpose of drawing lessons on what has worked well. It also identifies challenges to the effective functioning and provides recommendations on how to continue to strengthen the CBPF as a funding mechanism in support of timely, coordinated and principled humanitarian response for affected people. The evaluation will contribute to greater transparency and accountability for key stakeholders.

13. The occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) case study is one of five. Two members of the evaluation team undertook a two-week trip, conducting interviews with key stakeholders and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with communities receiving assistance.

1.2. Approach

14. The team used a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis, which included a document review (see annex 4 for a bibliography), project-related data analysis, semi-structured key informant interviews (see annex 3 for a list of participants) and gender disaggregated FGDs with communities. Table 1 below summarizes evidence sources for the case study. Annex 1 provides a more detailed outline of the methodology. The evaluation team visited one international NGO (INGO) and three local and national NGO (NNGO) projects in the West Bank and Gaza.[12]

Table 1: Summary of data collection methods and sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools and methods</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document and literature review</td>
<td>37 documents cited in this case study report, drawing from a repository of around 200 documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key informant interviews</td>
<td>83 key informants in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 38.5% female and 61.5% male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>73 community members from 4 oPt HF.-funded projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (45% male and 55% female)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. The findings of the case study, presented in sections 2-5, are structured according to the analytical framework and evaluation matrix (see Annexes 1 and 2). They move from inputs to activities and outputs and then to outcomes and, finally, improved response and operational impact.

[11] During the evaluation period, CBPFs were operational in the following countries: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Myanmar, Pakistan, occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. The Colombia fund closed at the end of 2018. The Haiti fund closed in 2015 and is not part of this evaluation.

[12] For purposes of consistency, this report refers to local and national NGOs as NNGOs.
1.3. The humanitarian context in oPt

16. This section provides a short overview of the humanitarian context in oPt while Annex 5 provides further details. The oPt has been occupied by the State of Israel since 1967. The humanitarian crisis is a direct consequence of this and is typically characterised as a protection crisis with humanitarian consequences. In 2019, 2.5 million Palestinians were considered in need of humanitarian protection and assistance, including 1.4 million registered refugees supported through the dedicated UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

17. The West Bank and East Jerusalem are subject to extensive movement restrictions as well as periodic violence, land seizures, and destruction of assets and livelihoods. There is also forced displacement, with the Israeli authorities citing security concerns, against a backdrop of the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. The Gaza Strip has been subject to a land, air and sea blockade, imposed following Hamas’s violent takeover in 2007, which has crippled the economy. It also periodically experiences intense episodes of violent conflict. A major deterioration in security occurred in 2018 with demonstrators taking part in protests dubbed “the Great March of Return”, which have been met with violent responses from the State of Israel.

18. There is currently no indication of progress towards a political solution to the conflict through a peace process to end the Israeli occupation and achieve the two-state solution. There is also little indication of a resolution to the internal Palestinian political divide between the Palestinian Authority (PA) based in Ramallah in the West Bank and the Hamas-led de facto authorities in Gaza.

1.4. Background to the oPt HF

19. The oPt HF was established as an Emergency Response Fund (ERF) in August 2007, in response to the Avian Flu outbreak in 2006 and the flood from the Beit Lahia sewage plant in the Gaza Strip which displaced thousands. In February 2015, the fund was renamed the Humanitarian Pooled Fund (HPF). The January 2017 version of the fund’s operational manual refers to it as the oPt Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF), which is its official name although some interviewees continued to refer to it as the HPF. In line with the CBPF guidelines issues in 2015, it aimed primarily to support the delivery of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) but retained the flexibility to allocate funds to unforeseen events or special requirements. The oPt HF’s three main objectives are to:

- Improve the humanitarian response by increasing the extent to which funding is allocated to priority humanitarian needs through an inclusive and coordinated process at the field level;
- Strengthen the leadership of the HC;
- Contribute to the delivery of the HRP.

20. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) decides on the strategy for the fund’s use and is responsible for ensuring that the fund delivers on its key objectives and is managed in accordance with global guidelines. An Advisory Board (AB) supports the HC with advice on the allocation of funds and other strategic issues. The OCHA Head of Office (HoO) and Humanitarian Financing Unit (HFU) also support the HC with day-to-day fund management.

[13] The 2016 HRP describes the humanitarian response in oPt with respect to these protected persons thusly: “These people living under occupation – “protected persons” according to international humanitarian law – need and deserve a robust protection response from the humanitarian community. This remains our main priority,” OCHA (2015), Humanitarian Response Plan January – December 2016: oPt

[14] “Between March and October 2018, 228 Palestinians, including 43 children, have been killed by Israeli forces in the demonstrations and other circumstances. Over 24,000 Palestinians have been injured, including over 5,800 wounded by live ammunition.” OCHA (2018) Humanitarian Response Plan 2018: oPt


Table 2: oPt HF at a glance, 2015-2018[18]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>oPt HF</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total annual contributions ($ millions)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of donors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of projects</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of people reached</td>
<td>200,187</td>
<td>522,599</td>
<td>7.8 million</td>
<td>2.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of implementing partners</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oPt HF as a % of total contributions to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5. Timelines of oPt HF allocations

21. Table 3 below provides an overview of the humanitarian timeline for the period under evaluation, highlighting key humanitarian events and the launch of HRPs alongside oPt HF and Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) allocations.[19] This provides useful evidence on the timing and timeliness of oPt HF allocations, both Standard Allocations (SAs) and Reserve Allocations (Ras), which are discussed in sections 3.2.1 and 5.1, and also on opportunities for ensuring complementarity between CERF and oPt HF allocations (discussed in section 4.2.2).

Table 3: Timeline of oPt HF allocations, 2015-2018[20]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Humanitarian event (appeal/crisis)</th>
<th>CERF allocations (RR /UFE )</th>
<th>oPt HF SA</th>
<th>oPt HF RA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Jan 2015</td>
<td>2015 HRP launched, 1.9 million in need, 1.6m targeted, $705m required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb 2015</td>
<td>Allocations from emergency window on rolling basis for emergency support to households in Area C at risk of displacement and transitional shelter in Gaza</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan-Feb 2015</td>
<td>$438,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2015</td>
<td>Emergency Response Fund (ERF) name changed to oPt Humanitarian Pooled Fund (HPF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2015</td>
<td>Emergency window allocation for emergency gap-filling response to 2015 winter storms in the West Bank and supporting livelihoods of small farmers affected by windstorms in Gaza</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 2015</td>
<td>$523,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>First SA with the aim of filling the most urgent gaps in underfunded high priority projects in the HRP.</td>
<td></td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>$2.5m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18] Data obtained from oPt HF annual reports. Contributions to the HRP as listed in OCHA FTS, downloaded 15/07/2019. The number of people reached is derived from OCHA’s Business Intelligence Portal [https://pfbi.unocha.org] downloaded 06/09/2019. The number of people reached in 2017 is extremely high because it was calculated by simply adding up the numbers of people reached by each project. The CBPFs changed their reporting approach in the 2018 annual reports so the number of people reached is the number reported by projects completed in 2018, regardless of whether they started in 2017 or 2018.

[19] The timeline is a snapshot of key events and does not seek to provide a comprehensive overview.


[22] CERF Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) grants provide support for critical needs in underfunded and often protracted crises. These are allocated during two rounds per year, OCHA (2019) About CERF, January 2019.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>July 2015</th>
<th>Oct 2015</th>
<th>Nov 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>Emergency WASH support to displaced families affected by hot weather</td>
<td></td>
<td>$249,792</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Emergency window rolling allocation for resilience support to poultry sector against Avian Flu in Gaza</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 2015 $250,062</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Nov 2015</td>
<td>Violence spreads from East Jerusalem to Israel, the wider West Bank and Gaza. 17 Israeli deaths and 69 Palestinian deaths and 7,392 injuries in the West Bank.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 2015 $3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2015</td>
<td>Emergency window rolling allocation for Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) to Palestinians affected by Oct conflict in East Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 2015 $241,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2015</td>
<td>2016 HRP launched, 2.3 million in need, 1.6m targeted, $571m required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2016</td>
<td>Emergency window allocation to meet urgent shortfalls in the joint UNRWA-WFP food assistance programme serving Bedouins and herders in Area C and provide rapid psychosocial support for conflict-affected persons in Hebron</td>
<td>Feb 2016 $337,719</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2016</td>
<td>First SA to address the most underfunded priorities in the HRP.</td>
<td>Apr 2016 $4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2016</td>
<td>Emergency window allocation for emergency water distribution to Area C</td>
<td>July 2016 $497,270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>Only 1,300 of the 11,000 housing units totally destroyed in the 2014 conflict have been reconstructed, with work underway on a further 3,200.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2016</td>
<td>As of end Oct, sharp increase in number of Palestinian-owned structures destroyed, dismantled or confiscated in West Bank (804). 1,133 Palestinians displaced as a result. Highest number of demolitions in East Jerusalem (150) since 2000. Donor-funded humanitarian assistance structures demolished or confiscated at unprecedented high (274).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2016</td>
<td>Emergency window allocation for provision of safe drinking water for vulnerable people in Gaza during winter of 2016-2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 2016 $251,316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2016</td>
<td>SA2 to address the most underfunded priorities related to winterization in the 2016 HRP.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 2016 $3m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>2017 HRP launched, 2 million in need, 1.6 million targeted, $547m required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2017</td>
<td>Further reduction in electricity supply to the Gaza Strip has devastating consequences for the living conditions of 2 million Palestinians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2017</td>
<td>First SA to address priority needs in the HRP launched. RA to provide fuel for hospitals and WASH facilities in Gaza</td>
<td>Apr 2017 $5.5m</td>
<td>Apr 2017 $0.5m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>RA to support the resilience of Bedouin herder communities in Area C</td>
<td>May 2017 $0.6m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>Major escalation in violence centring around the Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount in East Jerusalem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>Humanitarian appeal for $25m for urgent life-saving interventions to stabilize the situation in the Gaza Strip.[23] RA to support urgent WASH needs in the Gaza Strip.</td>
<td>July 2017 $0.4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>CERF allocation for fuel provision and to reduce the impact of the electricity crisis on the health and WASH sectors, and for immediate WASH needs. RA to respond to the Gaza Crisis Urgent Funding Appeal.[24]</td>
<td>Aug 2017 $4.2m RR</td>
<td>Aug 2017 $2.5m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2017</td>
<td>Agreement in Cairo between the Palestinian Authority and de facto authorities in Gaza that envisages the Government of National Consensus resuming authority in Gaza.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
<td>Second RA to respond to the Gaza Crisis Urgent Funding Appeal launched[25]</td>
<td>Nov 2017 $2.2m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2017</td>
<td>Multi-year HRP for 2018-2020 launched. In 2018, 2.5 million in need, 1.9m targeted, $539.7m required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>Major funding cuts for key humanitarian agencies, including UNRWA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
<td>2 Ras - $0.23 m for the West Bank Demolition Emergency Response project and $.9m for UNRWA’s Emergency Response – Gap Filling for Health and Food Security in West Bank project</td>
<td>Feb 2018 $1.13m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2018</td>
<td>30 March – Start of the Great March of Return (GMR) mass protests at the Israel-Gaza border. CERF grant to UNRWA</td>
<td>Mar 2018 $15m RR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2018</td>
<td>First SA launched. WHO issues Special Situation Report on Gaza. First RA to respond to the health and protection needs resulting from the GMR</td>
<td>Apr 2018 $3.9m</td>
<td>Apr 2018 $2.2m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Violence in Gaza peaks. Aid agencies appeal for $5.3m to scale up interventions. CERF allocation in response.</td>
<td>May 2018 $1.26m RR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Second RA providing $4.25m for health and protection in Gaza and $0.75m for protection in the West Bank</td>
<td>June 2018 $5m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[23] With one exception, all the proposed interventions were in the 2017 HRP but had not been implemented because only 24 per cent of the required funding had been received as of July. See https://www.ochaopt.org/content/overview-july-2017 and https://www.ochaopt.org/content/appeal-funding-stabilize-gaza-s-deteriorating-humanitarian-conditions-0


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Funding Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July-Aug 2018</td>
<td>Restrictions on fuel and gas into Gaza, leading to risk of essential services, particularly health and WASH facilities, shutting down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2018</td>
<td>Violence in Gaza peaks with record death toll. RA to address fuel crisis. Launch of second SA</td>
<td>Sept 2018 $8.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2018</td>
<td>Violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, escalates. 2019 HRP launched, 2.5m in need, 1.4m targeted, $350m required</td>
<td>Sept 2018 $1m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Inputs: Is the management of the fund fit for purpose and does it operate efficiently?

This section of the report focuses on the inputs to the Fund, which include financial contributions, risk management and the capacity of the humanitarian system to manage the fund and deliver projects.

2.1. Resource mobilization

2.1.1. Donor contributions

22. Figure 1 below shows the volume of funding to the oPt HF from 2015-2018, together with the total number of donors. This shows that the fund was at a modest level of $7.5-$10 million from 2015-2017 but then more than tripled in size in 2018 to almost $32 million. This sudden increase in contributions in 2018 was due to the convergence of a number of factors. One was that a number of the regular donors to the fund increased their total contributions considerably (this included Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany). This was mainly in response to the sharp increase in humanitarian needs due to violence related to the Great March of Return (GMR) in the Gaza Strip. Germany decided to increase its funding to the oPt HF as part of a wider shift in its humanitarian strategy for the oPt in 2017. It felt that the HF offered added value, not least because it could fund NGOs directly. In addition, Australia made a one-off contribution of almost $7.5 million when it had funding available because it had decided not to fund another pooled fund mechanism.

![Figure 1: Donor contributions to the oPt HF, 2015-2018](image)

23. Donors had a variety of reasons for contributing to the oPt HF. For some donors, the CBPF outcomes of improved coordination and strengthening the HC’s leadership role were important reasons for contributing. For donors with limited administrative capacity, the fund is a useful funding channel. One donor interviewee noted that the ability of CBPFs to finance NGOs directly is a key factor for contributing. In the highly politicized environment in oPt, the HF is also a useful way for donors to share risks and to have a stronger common voice. For example, two years ago, when the Israeli authorities confiscated tents for the Bedouin community in Area C financed by the oPt HF, seven donors to the oPt HF wrote a joint letter.

24. Table 4 shows that HRP requirements for oPt were highest in 2015, addressing the needs arising from the 2014 escalation in the conflict in the Gaza Strip. There was a significant reduction in 2016 and, since then, the requirements have been falling gradually. Despite the increase in humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip due to the Israeli response to

[26] Data obtained from OCHA GMS and downloaded on 27 May 2019
the GMR in 2018, the HC and humanitarian community took the decision to focus the HRP on humanitarian needs alone and request only $350 million in funding in 2019. Some interviewees pointed to the perception of previous HRPs being inflated because they included more developmental activities and felt that the decision to make them more emergency-focused was appropriate. Also, the percentage of HRP requirements met has been decreasing gradually since 2015, despite the declining requests, and there was a view that a more focused HRP would incentivize donors to contribute. With the decline in funding to the HRPs and the increase in funding to the oPt HF, the fund has increased as a percentage of HRP funding. This was particularly the case in 2018, when it almost achieved the Secretary-General's proposed target of 15 per cent of HRP funding being channelled through CBPFs in order to ensure that they have an impact on the humanitarian system. [27] However, since the oPt HF has generally comprised a much smaller proportion of HRP funding, the AB has set a country-specific target of 8 per cent of HRP funding for 2019. [28]

Table 4: oPt HF funding as a share of HRP contributions, 2015-2018 [29]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRP requirements</td>
<td>$706.1m</td>
<td>$570.7m</td>
<td>$551.9m</td>
<td>$539.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRP contributions</td>
<td>$399.5m</td>
<td>$284.4m</td>
<td>$258.9m</td>
<td>$246.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of HRP funding requirements met</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oPt HF as a % of total contributions to the HRP</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2. Resource mobilization strategy

25. The oPt HF operated as a small emergency response fund till 2018. During the evaluation period, it received regular contributions from a number of committed donors, including Sweden, Spain, Norway, Ireland, Germany and Belgium. According to CBPF global guidance, the HC is responsible for setting funding targets, with advice from OCHA and the AB. In oPt, the fund’s resource mobilization strategy was integrated with that of the OCHA office. At an AB meeting in December 2018, a member suggested putting in place a structured resource mobilization strategy. [30] In response, the HFU drafted a strategy that was discussed at the AB meeting in April 2019, with members suggesting potential donors for outreach activities as well as resource mobilization activities. The strategy focused on global donors to CBPFs and encouraging those that are not currently contributing to the oPt HF to do so. [31] Although the HC and the OCHA Head of Office (HoO) had the main responsibility for donor outreach activities, this had not happened by the time of the evaluation visit despite the HC’s commitment to increasing funding through the oPt HF. This was partly due to other priorities, including the launch of planning for the 2020 HRP.

26. Table 5 below shows the contributions of individual donors to the oPt HF during the evaluation period. This shows that Belgium has been a consistent donor to the fund. The significant increase in funding in 2018 was mainly due to the new contribution from Australia and to significant increases in funding from regular donors Norway and Germany. Sweden and Switzerland also increased their contributions, compared to previous years. In 2017, Turkey and Malta contributed to the fund for the first time but did not repeat this in 2018, despite the significant increase in humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. Iceland, which made modest contributions in 2013 and 2014, provided funding again in 2017 and 2018. This funding pattern suggests that the oPt HF’s resource mobilization efforts could focus on understanding the motivations of smaller and new donors in order to convert them into more regular contributors. Given the demands on the HC, who is also the Resident Coordinator and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and on the OCHA HoO, the HFU is perhaps better placed to engage with these donors. Senior members of the HFU team have been in post for a considerable time and, being national staff, have a thorough understanding of the context as well as the fund so they are well placed to answer questions about how the fund operates. The timing of engagement with donors is also important since some donors have multi-year funding cycles for the oPt so the best time to influence their decision-making is when they are embarking on a new process. For example, DFID indicated that it would be preparing

[29] Data on HRP revised requirements and contributions from Financial Tracking Service downloaded 15/07/2019.
a new business case in the near future and Australia was due to start developing a new country strategy at the time of the evaluation visit.

### Table 5: Donors to the oPt HF from 2015-2018 (US$ millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNF</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. The HC and OCHA could also consider more issue-based fundraising approaches. For example, a national-level donor group focused on health meets monthly and the health cluster provides an analysis of key needs and issues that require funding and/or advocacy. NGO cluster members might attend a meeting to provide details on a specific issue. While this might include some success stories, the main purpose of the meetings is to foster dialogue on key issues. Donors already regard AB meetings as a useful forum for discussing contextual and strategic issues (see section 2.4.1 below) and the fund is a useful mechanism for convening the main humanitarian actors to respond to emerging and acute situations. Therefore, the oPt HF could highlight different areas of its work and where it could focus additional funds. This would not require additional meetings but could be a segment before or after a regular AB meeting.

28. The political context in oPt is a major challenge to the HC and OCHA's resource mobilization efforts. Some donors, such as the UK and Canada, have been hesitant about channelling funds through the oPt HF, even though they contribute to CBPFs in other countries, because they do not have complete control over which partners receive funds or where funding is directed. This is due to a fear of being accused of funding NGOs with links to proscribed individuals or groups, which is closely monitored by lobby groups in donor countries and by the Israeli government. The HFU has made efforts to reassure donors by highlighting its robust risk management systems (see section 2.2 below) but this remains an ongoing challenge. Donor decisions about whether to channel funding through the HF can also depend on where the government's sympathies lie. Although the United States (US) funding cuts are an extreme example, other donor funding can also fluctuate with changes in governments. It would be helpful for the HFU to continue to engage with donors that contribute to other CBPFs but are not funding the oPt HF in order to understand if their needs and concerns have changed. One donor indicated that its views had changed over time and it could be more amenable to contributing.

#### 2.1.3. Multi-year contributions

29. Late and unpredictable contributions to the oPt HF during the evaluation period made it difficult for the fund to plan allocations (see figure 2 below). In particular, due to contributions arriving late in 2015, the fund could not launch the first Standard Allocation (SA) till June, which meant that projects did not start till August, instead of early in the year. In 2017, the oPt HF used available funds for two Reserve Allocations (RAs) to address the deteriorating situation in Gaza (see Table 3) but this meant that it did not have sufficient funds to launch a second SA. The substantial increase in contributions in 2018, and the fact that most of the funding arrived in the second quarter of the year, enabled the HF to

launch two SAs (see figure 2). It was also able to make several RAs and, with additional funds arriving in the last quarter of the year, to carry funds over for the first SA in 2019, which allocated $12 million. However, at the time of the project visit in June 2019, the oPt HF only had $3 million in paid contributions. The AB requires the HFU to maintain a reserve of $2 million for unforeseen emergencies, which only left $1 million available for the second SA. The HFU was extremely worried about the lack of funding. Then, on the last day of the evaluation visit, Germany made an unannounced contribution of $10 million, transforming the situation.

30. Against this background of unpredictable and late contributions, multi-year contributions from Switzerland (which has pledged $1 million each year for 2019 and 2020) and from Belgium (which has made two two-year commitments) are welcome. However, the HFU still does not have information on when it might expect the payments. As of June 2019, it had not received payment from either donor. Discussions for the evaluation revealed that the Belgian payment of almost $4 million was delayed at headquarters for administrative reasons. With funding decisions made at headquarters, donor representatives at country level often have little information themselves about the timing of a contribution. This makes it challenging for them to provide information that the HFU could use for planning purposes. Nevertheless, greater communication between the HFU and regular donors would help to raise concerns and challenges. Donors interviewed for the evaluation were unaware of the fund's difficulty with planning the second SA and noted that they could have pushed headquarters to speed up payments or even increase funding, had they been aware of the situation.

Figure 2: Timing of donor contributions to the oPt HF, 2015-2018

Figure 2: Timing of donor contributions to the oPt HF, 2015-2018

31. The oPt HF had an accountability framework in place during the evaluation period. Its 2015 operational manual included a risk analysis and mitigation matrix.\[^{34}\] This was included in the January 2017 operational manual with very minor changes.\[^{35}\] Subsequent versions of the operational manual include a risk analysis and mitigation matrix organized according to the criticality level of various risks. The matrix in the 2019 operational manual is based on an expanded Risk Management Framework. The AB discussed the risk management framework, together with the updated operational manual, at its meeting in April 2019 but did not make significant comments.\[^{36}\] In light of the highly politicized nature of the oPt context, it is unsurprising that the highest level risks identified are political in nature – the risk of a

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\[^{33}\] Data from OCHA GMS API downloaded 5th August 2019.
\[^{34}\] OCHA (2015a) occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Pooled Fund Operational Manual, October 2015
\[^{36}\] OCHA (2019a) oPt Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – 15th April 2019
partner with a political agenda receiving an HF grant; the risk of sanctions against the UN by the host government or a global power; politicization of the fund’s visibility at project or partner level. Alongside the risk matrices, the HFU had robust mechanisms for financial and programmatic monitoring and oversight in place during the evaluation period, as discussed in the following sections.

32. While donors generally welcome visibility of their funding, for example through logos at project sites, in oPt (as highlighted by the fund’s risk matrix) some donors are concerned about coming under scrutiny by lobby groups and the Israeli government. A cluster coordinator argued that partners, particularly NNGOs, could do more to highlight the excellent work that the oPt HF is funding. However, they need training on how best to make the fund’s work more visible without relying on simplistic mechanisms such as boards and logos.

2.2.1. Capacity assessment and due diligence

33. In line with CBPF global guidelines, the HFU conducts due diligence and capacity assessment of potential NGO partners to ensure that they are eligible to receive funding. The assessment aims to determine whether an NGO has sufficient institutional, managerial, financial and technical expertise to manage oPt HF grants. In oPt, the HFU conducts the due diligence and capacity assessment internally and on an ongoing basis (it suspends capacity assessments only during an allocation process). As part of the due diligence process, the HFU checks all NGOs against a Security Council list in order to comply with counter-terrorism legislation.

34. Potential NGO partners need to submit due diligence documents, include proof of registration, management manuals (for finance, human resources, etc.) and financial documentation. This is not a challenge for Palestinian NGOs since, under Palestinian law, they need to have relevant policies and manuals in place in order to register. The Palestinian NGO network has made available standard policies and there have also been a few projects to help NNGOs to put in place appropriate policies and systems. Therefore, the HFU focuses on the capacity of potential partners to implement projects. This was done as an online review but, since 2018, the HFU has been conducting more detailed reviews, requesting the NGO to visit the OCHA office with relevant documents for a more in-depth discussion of its work. This provides an opportunity to understand how the NGOs put their manuals and policies into practice. At the time of the country visit, the HFU was considering how to strengthen its capacity assessment matrix and process.

Lessons: The HFU could draw on the experience and practice of other CBPFs to strengthen its capacity assessment matrix and review process. This could include visiting NGO offices in order to test the robustness of procedures outlined in their policies and manuals.

2.2.2. Monitoring

35. During the evaluation period, the fund manager and finance and monitoring officer undertook programmatic monitoring. Recently, the HFU had hired a Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) officer based in the West Bank and, at the time of the evaluation visit, was in the process of hiring one to be based in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the HFU team relies on OCHA’s network of sub-offices for information on challenges with projects and feedback. In one case, a few months after a project to provide solar panels had ended, OCHA’s field office in Gaza highlighted a problem with an installation. The HFU team was able to follow up on this with the implementing partner.

36. Unlike some other case study funds, the oPt HF did not have dedicated monitoring capacity until recently. Nevertheless, it put great emphasis on project monitoring visits as part of the oPt HF’s accountability framework, aiming to visit every project at least once and during implementation rather than once the project has ended. This is because it regards monitoring visits as a crucial form of contact with partners and also important for ensuring timely implementation. The HFU can be persistent about making a monitoring visit. In one case, an NGO partner kept re-scheduling proposed visits because of religious holidays but the HFU still made the visit after the project had ended.
37. The HFU has generally been able to monitor over 90 per cent of projects, which is a significant achievement. In 2016, the team visited all but two UN agency projects, which the HFU did not monitor at the time. Since 2017, the HFU has monitored UN agency projects as well, which is useful for identifying challenges. For example, a monitoring visit to a medical warehouse in the Gaza Strip in 2019 highlighted a number of delays with a project funded in mid-2018. In 2017, the HFU monitored 100 per cent of OPt HF-funded projects that were implemented that year, either during implementation or within six months of the project's end date. In 2018, the team conducted monitoring visits to 41 out of 43 projects that had required monitoring in the year, with only two medium-risk projects not visited. Since the HFU was increasing its monitoring capacity, it intended to visit projects more than once to ensure that activities were being implemented according to the work plans.

38. The HFU ensures that a male and female member of staff undertake monitoring visits so that, in addition to verifying project activities, they can conduct gender-disaggregated consultations with community members. This enables them to check on community participation throughout the project cycle and mechanisms for accountability to affected populations (AAP). The HFU also follows up with partners and communities on complaints mechanisms, such as a complaints box or telephone number. While the HFU can check on the existence of these mechanisms, partners do not necessarily share information about the complaints that they have received with the HFU team.

Good practice: Having both a male and female member of staff conducting monitoring visits is good practice because this enables the team to hear the perspectives of both women and men. It is also good practice to follow up on community participation and AAP mechanisms rather than focusing only on verifying project activities.

39. The HFU aims to involve both cluster coordinators and OCHA field offices in monitoring visits. According to the fund's 2016 annual report, cluster coordinators were more engaged in monitoring visits even though they are not required to do so, thereby promoting learning, knowledge sharing and capacity building. In some cases, cluster coordinators participated in HFU monitoring visits on an ad hoc basis. A couple of coordinators suggested that it would be helpful if the HFU could share a calendar of planned monitoring visits so that they could ensure that they were available.

2.2.3. Financial spot-checks

40. Based on the results of the capacity assessment, each partner is assigned a risk level. In accordance with the fund's operational manual, the HFU conducts a financial spot check for every high-risk partner. It may also select medium and low-risk partners for a financial spot check on a case-by-case basis, for example, if a medium-risk partner is implementing several projects or if it has received OPt HF funds for the first time. Also, if the HFU receives a complaint or has any reason for querying an NGO's financial management, it conducts a spot check. The objective of the financial spot check is to check partner systems and make recommendations on how they can improve their financial management capacity.

41. The HFU informs the partner a week in advance (in accordance with the fund's guidelines) that there will be a financial spot check so that it can prepare its financial and other documents. The finance and monitoring officer reviews relevant documents to prepare for the spot check. She uses the global CBPF template for financial spot checks. After getting an overview of the NGO's systems, the spot check entails examining details in a sample of documents that the finance officer selects on site. This is a thorough check of procurement documents as well as samples of documents from different areas covered by the spot check. The aim is to identify ineligible or suspicious expenditure or red flags that the NGO has not followed procedures correctly.

42. The finance officer is diligent in conducting financial spot checks, particularly in reviewing procurement processes. For large procurements, the HFU participates in the opening of tenders. During one procurement process, the finance officer also observed the decision-making process to ensure that it was fair and transparent. The finance officer also

[39] OCHA (2017c) 2016 occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report. In 2017, the HFU amended the fund's operational manual to state that it would monitor UN projects as well, despite some resistance from UN agencies.


reviews human resources documents carefully to ensure that NGO partners are not double charging for staff members across different projects. This has identified problems in some cases although it is not easy.

**Good practice:** The HFU’s thoroughness in conducting financial spot checks is good practice and contributes to a robust risk management process overall. There is potential for other CBPFs to learn from oPt on how to maximize the effectiveness of spot checks and on which areas to focus.

43. Once the financial spot check report is agreed, the partner, fund manager and the finance officer sign it. The HFU shares the report with the audit company. The HFU found the financial spot check was a useful tool to identify cases of financial mismanagement, ineligible expenditure or even fraud at an early stage. If the spot check identified any red flags, the HFU also shares the report with the CBPF compliance unit in New York to get its advice on whether to wait for the end-of-project audit or whether to launch an investigation or forensic audit. The HFU believed that it was important to follow up on any challenges identified in a timely way to ensure that the problem was corrected rather than waiting for an end-of-project audit. This was based on the HFU’s experience and it raised this issue at a CBPF workshop on fraud case management.

44. The HFU’s view was that it was important to conduct spot checks internally rather than outsourcing them to ensure that partners are complying with CBPF guidelines as well as financial management rules. While the HFU has been conducting spot checks effectively, it felt that it would benefit from regular communication with the CBPF-Section’s compliance unit. The CBPF-Section in New York has conducted a number of risk management-related workshops and training. The annual fund managers’ workshop also has a dedicated session on risk management. Thus, there are a number of opportunities for HFU staff across CBPFs to share experiences and learn from each other.

### 2.2.4. Audits

45. A private company conducted independent audits of all oPt HF-funded projects. During the evaluation period, OCHA New York had a three-year agreement with the national branch of an international firm. OCHA oPt then negotiated a cost-effective rate for each audit. From 2019 onwards, OCHA New York has put in place a global Long-Term Agreement for audits. When HFUs at country level are ready to audit projects, they prepare and agree a task order with the audit firm.

46. The firm that conducted audits during the evaluation period prepared for them by reviewing relevant documents and found the financial spot check report particularly useful. The firm generally spent two to three days on audits of small NGOs and a week or more on large NGOs, unless there was a problem that required additional time for follow-up. For each audit, it aimed to review over 80 per cent of project documents and paid particular attention to procurements. Although the firm identified a number of cases of ineligible expenditures that resulted in NGOs refunding money to the oPt HF, its view was that HFU partners did not set out to commit deliberate fraud. This was particularly because the HFU’s due diligence and capacity assessment process meant that it worked with credible partners.

47. Figure 3 below shows the total number of audits, financial spot checks and monitoring visits that the oPt HF conducted. It is based on GMS data provided by the HFU. The data is based on the year in which funding was allocated, rather than on calendar year. The table covers the period 2016-18 because, prior to 2016, the HFU used a different system to record assurance activities.
2.2.5. Performance management of partners

48. The GMS enables CBPF teams to track and assess partner performance, using a range of criteria and information sources. These include capacity assessments, project monitoring, financial spot checks and the timeliness of narrative and financial reporting. The GMS aggregates the scores to provide an overall partner performance score. The scores indicate when a partner’s risk rating should be changed (increased or lowered). In oPt, the HFU had not generally changed partners’ risk scoring because it had many new partners and felt that partners should demonstrate their performance over more than one project before having their risk rating changed.

2.2.6. Compliance issues

49. As noted earlier, although there have been cases of ineligible expenditures or partners not following procurement procedures properly, the oPt HF has not had to deal with major fraud cases. The most significant challenge has been cases of loss when Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have confiscated or destroyed assets of HF-funded projects. The HFU reports such losses in a number of fora because other donors and aid agencies encounter similar problems.

50. There have been discussions at AB meetings, including in December 2018 and April 2019, where donors have requested more information about incidents of fund mismanagement and fraud. In particular, one donor was concerned to learn of a corruption case in 2017 that had been closed through the oPt HF’s annual report rather than being informed directly. An information-sharing protocol for CBPFs is in place and the CBPF-Section in New York supports HFUs in drafting notifications to donors. However, donor representatives on the AB at country level might make different requests, leading to differences in approaches. The oPt HFU informs the AB about categories of findings from the financial spot checks but there is a need to ensure greater guidance and consistency across the CBPFs on information sharing. With the increase in the oPt HF’s funding and number of projects in 2018, it is also a challenge to ensure that there is sufficient time at AB meetings to provide an adequate level of information. The HFU’s increased M&R capacity will increase its ability to provide more quantitative data to the AB on risk management activities, such as monitoring visits and financial post checks, as well as analysis of findings.

2.3. Implications of the global standardization of CBPFs

51. CBPFs have standardized increasingly since the issuing of the 2015 Policy Instruction and section 1.4 outlined how the oPt HF has evolved since it was established in 2007. Since 2017, all CBPFs have started using a Common Performance Framework (CPF) that makes it easier for donors and other stakeholders to look at how they are performing against their five principles of inclusiveness, flexibility, timeliness, efficiency and risk management. The AB discussed the CPF indicators for oPt in meetings in 2018. The CBPF annual reports now also have a harmonized format that has sought to make it easier for donors to review results across the different funds. These aspects of standardization have made the CBPFs more transparent.

52. The GMS has been an important tool for promoting standardization across the funds, through standard templates

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[42] Data provided by oPt HFU.
for proposals and reporting. It has also increased the transparency of the CBPFs by making data across the funds easily accessible through the Business Intelligence portal. However, a number of partners (particularly NNGOs) found the GMS cumbersome and time-consuming. Some noted that the new IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) and other cross-cutting issues required a lot of checklists and filling boxes. On the other hand, at least one INGO partner appreciated the system’s design and found the automated process very smooth.

53. Although the CBPFs have global guidelines, these are adapted to suit different country contexts. In oPt, the HF put in place an operational manual in October 2015, once the AB had reviewed it. It revised this in January 2017, July 2018 and April 2019. While the 2015 and 2017 operational manuals are broadly similar, the 2018 version aligned with global CBPF processes in committing to two standard allocations per year (based on the availability of funding), focusing its objectives on the expected outcomes of CBPFs (as captured in the logic model in the 2015 Policy Instruction) and also aiming to meet the global target of increasing the scale of the oPt HF to channel 15 per cent of HRP requirements. The April 2019 update only made minor changes.

2.4. Capacity of the humanitarian system

2.4.1. Leadership of the oPt HF

54. As outlined in the oPt HF’s operational manual, the HC sets the strategy for the fund’s use and also ensures that the fund delivers on its key objectives while being managed in accordance with CBPF global guidelines. The AB supports the HC with advice on strategic issues and the allocation of funds. The OCHA HoO’s responsibilities include supporting the HC on strategic issues and with resource mobilization as well as supervising the HFU and ensuring that it coordinates effectively with other OCHA country office units and sub-offices. The HFU manages the fund’s day-to-day operations, including allocation processes and accountability.

55. oPt has had two HCs during the evaluation process – one from May 2015 to the beginning of 2018 and the current HC from February 2018. The UNDP Special Representative was acting HC for a short time before the current HC assumed his post. The current HC has engaged actively in facilitating dialogue among different stakeholder groups, which has helped to diffuse tensions and resolve misunderstandings. One recent example is of the HC convening a meeting to discuss NNGO concerns about 2018 allocations with all relevant parties (see section 3.3.2). Section 4.2 discusses the HC’s leadership and the oPt HF’s contribution to strengthening this.

56. While CBPF global guidelines recommend an equal number of different stakeholders on the AB, in 2018, the oPt AB had all its 10 contributing donors, two NNGOs (including a representative from Gaza) and two INGOs. In addition, the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) and the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) are observers. NGO representatives on the AB felt that it was an effective forum in which their views were considered. Although UN agencies should have the same level of representation as NGOs, in 2018, they did not participate in the AB. As of 2019, the oPt HF has made a more concerted effort to secure UN agency participation in the AB.

57. For small funds, such as oPt and Lebanon, having all contributing donors on the AB is a resource mobilization opportunity and also gives the donors an opportunity to engage with the HC on strategic issues. Also, as noted in section 2.1.1, donors on the AB can advocate with a stronger common voice. Nevertheless, during a visit from the CBPF-Section in New York in March 2018, AB members discussed whether to reduce the number of donor representatives to four, to provide equal representation for different stakeholders. While one donor agreed to this, the PNGO representative argued in favour of having all donors on the AB. In the end, there was no change made. However, a donor suggested that ECHO should be included an observer. The rationale was that ECHO could contribute humanitarian and technical expertise, which other donors tended to lack because their representatives usually managed a wider portfolio with development and/or political responsibilities. Also, ECHO as a major humanitarian donor is likely to be funding the same partners as the oPt HF so including it as an observer on the AB offers the potential for avoiding funding overlaps. This was accepted and ECHO has been attending AB meetings since December 2018.

[48] OCHA (2018c) oPt Humanitarian Fund (HF) Advisory Board Meeting, 22 March 2018
58. The HC chairs the AB and donor interviewees clearly valued it as a very useful forum for discussing the wider humanitarian and political context with the HC. This is despite the fact that there is a plethora of groups in which donors participate, such as the heads of cooperation group, the heads of donor missions group, the Humanitarian Country Team Plus, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) group.

59. While decision-making authority rests ultimately with the HC, the AB’s role is to question and advise. The extent to which HCs took account of the AB’s views varied. The RAs to fund emergency fuel supplies to Gaza in April 2017 and to fund UNRWA (following United States (US) government funding cuts) in February 2018 both led to some discussions in the AB but the HCs ultimately exercised their decision-making authority. In the case of a proposal to fund UNDP for legal aid services in 2016, which had proved controversial, the HC took account of the AB’s concerns. The minutes of an AB meeting show that he asked UNDP to withdraw its proposal.[49]

60. The decision to fund UNRWA provides a useful example of the AB’s role and interactions between HCs and the AB in oPt. AB meeting minutes from 7 February 2018 outline UNRWA’s proposal to fill a funding gap for its assistance to Bedouin-herder communities at risk of forcible transfer. This had arisen due to the US decision to cut funding to UNRWA, announced in January. UNRWA was urgently looking for other sources of funding and the director approached the HC for assistance for its West Bank operations. It requested funding for 11 months to provide mobile health clinics, mental health and psychosocial support, and logistics for the UNRWA-WFP food aid program. The Acting HC had already endorsed UNRWA’s proposal but was willing to consider inputs since it was undergoing a technical review. He took on board the AB’s concerns and, eventually, the oPt HF provided $900,000 for health and food security (logistics to distribute food assistance to Bedouin-herder communities) for six months. Despite this, one donor expressed strong reservations, arguing that such decisions could lead donors to reduce their contributions to the HF.

61. In addition to discussing allocations, the AB plays a role in other aspects of fund management, such as reviewing annual reports and the fund’s operational manual, discussing risk management, and providing input into the development of CPF indicators. Although some donors have limited capacity for engaging in the details of fund management, there was a general view that the AB operated well. Its role and performance are well aligned with CBPF global guidance as well as the oPt HF’s operational manual (which, since the July 2018 version, emphasizes that the AB has an advisory function and that final decision-making authority rests entirely with the HC as the AB chair).

2.4.2. The HFU’s management capacity

62. In oPt, the HFU comprised a small team of national staff and UN Volunteers (UNVs). In 2016 and 2017, when the fund received contributions of around $10 million, the HFU had two staff members and a UNV. It is commendable that the HFU managed the unexpected increase in funding in 2018, to $32 million, with the addition of a UNV in September. It also initiated the process of hiring an M&R officer based in the West Bank. In 2019, when the team is following up on the implementation of allocations made later in 2018 and also funding carried over and allocated through the first SA in 2019, it decided to hire another M&R officer to be based in the Gaza Strip. However, one UNV will be leaving so there will be a total of five team members by the end of 2019 – four staff members and a UNV. Figure 4 below shows the cost of the HFU from 2016-2019 (it does not include the cost for 2015 since the OCHA oPt office budget covered the HFU’s cost rather than charging this to the oPt HF as a direct cost). Using UNVs has been a cost-effective way to increase the team’s capacity, particularly given the uncertainty about whether contributions will remain at the 2018 level or decrease.

63. HFU staff members are nationals, with two staff members having been in post long-term. This is not only cost-effective but adds considerable value. The staff members have a thorough understanding of the context and are able to engage with local communities when conducting monitoring visits. NNGOs also find them approachable and easy to communicate with. The UNVs have also been fluent Arabic speakers, which is important in the context. As noted above, it is impressive that a small team managed the tripling in the fund’s size in 2018 effectively, and without compromising the robust risk management mechanisms. Therefore, it is not surprising that stakeholders, including donors, spoke very highly of the fund manager and the team.

64. The HFU plays an important role in the allocation process, including by participating in Strategic Review Committees (SRCs) to promote transparency and consistency in the decision-making process (see section 3.1.3 for further details).

2.4.3. The capacity of the clusters to manage allocations

65. In oPt, the cluster structure reflects the complexity of the context with national clusters based in Jerusalem and sub-national clusters in the West Bank and Gaza. The extent to which clusters were fully staffed at all three levels and whether cluster coordinators had other responsibilities or not varied across the clusters. For example, the shelter cluster had a dedicated coordinator in Gaza but the West Bank coordinator also had national level responsibilities. The national WASH cluster coordinator was double-hatted, with both agency and cluster responsibilities. There was a high turnover of some coordinators and it was also difficult to securing adequate funding for coordination functions. Taken together, these factors influenced cluster functioning, which included their role in oPt HF allocation processes. There was a suggestion that some clusters were more proactive than others.

66. For oPt HF standard allocations, the HC sets the strategic direction and then clusters flesh this out with individual cluster priorities to which members respond with project proposals (see section 3.1.3 for a more detailed description). The extent to which national and sub-national level cluster coordinators worked together (as well as with line ministries) on setting allocation priorities varied across clusters. Unlike in other case study countries, clusters in oPt included a gender focal point to help improve gender mainstreaming. As described in section 3.4.3, the protection cluster gender focal point has been particularly engaged in oPt HF-funded projects.

67. NNGOs had increased their participation in clusters, encouraged by the PNGO network and partly because this was a prerequisite for securing oPt HF funding. Some cluster coordinators had also supported NNGO participation and applications for oPt HF funding. However, there were still challenges with participation, as described in section 3.3.2. NGOs (both national and international) felt that cluster lead agencies, which were UN agencies, had a stronger say in setting priorities than other members. NGOs also tended to be more concerned about the composition and operation of project review committees (see section 3.1.3). This was partly because the selection of review committee members

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[50] Data on management costs provided by the HFU. The 2019 cost of the HFU as a percentage of contributions is an estimate as of end July 2019 when, according to the GMS Business Intelligence Portal, the HF had received contributions of $18 million (see: https://pfbi.unocha.org/index.html#contribution_heading). However, the percentage is likely to decrease as the fund receives further contributions later in the year.
varied both across and within clusters.

68. Although the clusters are strongly engaged in the allocation process, a couple highlighted that they have no role in the reporting process. This limits their overview of project implementation and partner performance. This is different to South Sudan, for example, where cluster coordinators provide the initial comments on NGO partner narrative reports.

2.4.4. The capacity of partners to deliver oPt HF projects

69. The oPt HF, like all funds, can only meet its objectives if it has partners with the capacity to identify those most in need and to deliver timely, coordinated and high-quality programs. In view of the long-term occupation and associated needs, aid agencies operating in the oPt have generally been established for decades and have a long history of working in this context. The partner landscape in oPt is unique in having an agency with a specific mandate like UNRWA. The nature of the context means that there are a large number of experienced Palestinian NGOs with implementation capacity but, as described in section 3.3.1, they face a number of constraints.

70. Given the high level of national capacity in oPt, the HF decided to prioritize direct funding to NNGOs in 2011 (with partnerships through international organizations as an alternative approach to promoting NNGO implementation). Section 3.3.1 examines the extent to which the oPt HF selects the best-placed partners, including UN agencies if they have the greatest capacity to procure items (given the blockade of the Gaza Strip) and to deliver services on a large scale. Section 3.4 below then explores the extent to which oPt HF partners are incorporating cross-cutting issues into their projects in order to deliver quality assistance that takes account of those with specific needs and vulnerabilities. Although cash-based programming is feasible in oPt, partners have generally had limited experience with this. The reasons for this are discussed in section 3.1.4.
3. Activities and outputs: To what extent are CBPFs supporting partners to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs in a way that is timely and consistent with Grand Bargain priorities?

This section of the report examines the fund’s performance in delivering key activities, including the identification of priority needs, selecting the best-placed partners, and supporting the delivery of program quality. It concludes with an overview of the outputs from oPt HF projects.

3.1. Contextually relevant and in line with HRPs

3.1.1. Alignment with the HRP and strategic priorities

71. The oPt HF has been committed to aligning with the HRP (while retaining the flexibility to respond to unforeseen needs) since the 2015 iteration of its operational manual. Figure 5 below puts oPt HF allocations into the context of HRP funding requirements and funding received over the evaluation period. As mentioned in Table 2, the oPt HF accounted for between 1.9 per cent of HRP contributions in 2015 to 13 per cent of total HRP funding in 2018, when HF contributions increased considerably but HRP funding continued to decline.

Figure 5: HRP appeal and contributions, oPt HF and CERF allocations, 2015-18

72. One clear way for the HF to align SAs with HRPs is to require partners to have projects in the HRP in order to be eligible to receive funding. It has done this in the past but, in recent allocation strategy documents (for the SAs in 2018 and 2019), this has not been a requirement. However, the strategy document for the second SA in 2018 noted that, for the food security sector, it was preferable if applicants already had similar activities in progress or planned in the 2018 HRP.

73. There were different views on whether the oPt HF should fund only projects in the HRP through its SAs. Cluster coordinators were strongly in favour of having this stipulation. One reason is that requiring projects to be in the HRP provides an incentive for partners, particularly NNGOs, to participate in cluster meetings as well as the lengthy HRP development process. As one frustrated cluster coordinator put it, “We work hard to prioritise projects for the HRP from June to December. We design the HNO [Humanitarian Needs Overview] and HRP and then an allocation comes along and ignores them. How should cluster coordinators or partners feel?” Also, not having this requirement opens the door

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[52] Data on HRP revised requirements and contributions from OCHA FTS; data on oPt HF contributions from OCHA GMS; data on CERF allocations obtained from https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country
[53] Reserve Allocations (RAs) that are, by definition, for unforeseen or unmet needs might require funding outside the HRP.
to a large number of proposal submissions, which significantly increases the burden of the review process. A third reason was that allowing partners to develop new proposals to respond to an allocation strategy could disadvantage partners seeking funding for their HRP projects because the former could tailor proposals to allocation strategy criteria. In addition, projects in the HRP should have already undergone a needs assessment and project development process and going through these again for new projects in response to an allocation creates further work. Finally, there was a view that the HF should set an example to encourage other donors and the government to support the HRP.

74. The argument in support of SAs funding projects outside the HRP is that, in 2019, the HRP requirement was reduced considerably, from US$ 540 million in 2018 to US$ 350 million in 2019. This made it more difficult for partners to have their projects included in the HRP and there was a risk that restricting oPt HF funding to HRP projects could exclude funding for priority activities. There was considerable debate around the HC’s firm push for a more focused HRP, in light of low levels of funding for previous HRPs. Donors were generally supportive, feeling that the 2019 HRP had been rigorously prioritized and excluded resilience components to focus more clearly on humanitarian response. However, cluster coordinators and partners had strong concerns that, in a highly politicized context, reducing the funding request sent a misleading message that humanitarian needs in oPt had reduced when, in fact, they were as high as before or increasing. There was also a view that it would give affected communities the impression that there was less support for them and increase their frustration with the political situation. Despite these concerns, the 2020 HRP is likely to make a similar funding request to 2019.

75. As mentioned above, throughout the evaluation period, SA strategies have been based on HRPs and explicitly linked to their strategic objectives (SO) even when the oPt HF has not restricted funding to HRP projects. For example, the strategy documents for both the first and second SAs in 2018 state that the allocations will focus specifically on SO1 and SO2 (see Figure 6 below for details of the SO). The strategy for the SA in 2017 makes detailed links between the allocation and the HRP.[55] It lists funding envelopes per cluster, based on each cluster’s analysis of the budget for HRP top priority activities and funding gaps and discussions of priorities with cluster members. Each cluster was able to define how best to align with HRP priorities. For example, the WASH cluster prioritized HRP projects that had been defined as normal priority when the HRP was developed. This was because the projects that had been deemed a top priority at the time were focused on a flood response, which was no longer a priority for the upcoming summer season, or on constructing/rehabilitating water networks that would require more funding than was available from the oPt HF. This is a good example of ensuring that the oPt HF allocation was used for the most relevant projects in the HRP. In the food security and health sectors, the top priority HRP projects required funding that far exceeded what was available so the clusters provided details of how they further prioritized projects for oPt HF funding.

Figure 6: Links between oPt HF Standard Allocations and 2018 HRP SO[56]

SO1: The rights of Palestinians living under occupation, including those living under the blockade and other restrictions, are protected, respected and promoted in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL), while duty-bearers are increasingly held to account.

SO2: The basic needs of vulnerable Palestinians living under occupation are met through the provision of quality basic services and improved access to resources, in accordance with the rights of protected persons under IHL.

SO3: The capacity of vulnerable Palestinians to cope with and overcome protracted crisis, including from environmental threats, is supported, while solutions to violations and other root causes of threats and shocks are pursued.

Until 2018, CBPF annual reports did not detail how much funding was allocated to each SO in the HRP. However, the 2018 annual report shows that by far the largest proportion of oPt HF funding was directed at SO2, to meet the basic needs of vulnerable Palestinians (see Figure 6). Roughly the same proportion of funding was directed towards SO1 to protect, respect and promote the rights of Palestinians and SO3 to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable Palestinians. However, as described in section 5.1, even projects to provide practical assistance or meet the material needs of communities can have a protection benefit.

### 3.1.2. Contextually relevant funding

The oPt HF was established as a small-scale emergency response fund, which was reflected in the ‘emergency window’ that it had in 2015-2016, providing grants to meet urgent needs on a rolling basis (see Table 3). However, the oPt context is one of a decades-long occupation and a chronic protection crisis with specific spikes in urgent humanitarian needs (see Annex 5). As a result, the humanitarian community put in place a three-year humanitarian response strategy (2018-2020), with annual HRPs. The SO in figure 6 above (which apply across the three-year strategy) highlight intertwined needs. For example, without roads to access their agricultural land in the West Bank, farmers would be unable to plant on their land and settlers would take over the unused land. Therefore, farmers require livelihoods support that also protects their right to their land. Unlike in HRPs for other humanitarian crises the SO do not refer to urgent, life-saving needs.

The small scale of the oPt HF (until 2018) and the general view that CBPFs should address urgent, life-saving needs, on one hand, and the chronic nature of the crisis, on the other, pose a challenge to providing contextually relevant funding. Interviewees highlighted the difficulty of trying to implement more sustainable approaches that address longer-term needs (for example, working on water supply networks rather than water trucking) through projects that are usually funded for six months. In the context of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, even more urgent activities, such as providing medical supplies, can take time to implement because it requires negotiations with the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health as well as navigating the cumbersome and frequently changing rules of the Israeli government. This requires either projects with a longer timeframe or no-cost extensions to six-month projects. Also, with its relatively limited size, it is important for the fund to focus on where it can best add value. The prioritization process for the SA in 2017 described in the previous section is a good example of a thorough and detailed analysis of how best to use the small amount of funding available.

To some extent, individual partners also have to ensure that they take contextual relevance into account when designing their projects. The evaluation team visited two projects that had rehabilitated shelters, one in the H2 area of Hebron and the other in Gaza. The Hebron rehabilitation project had set a budget per household for rehabilitation activities but had not defined exactly what it would do so that it could tailor the assistance to the needs of each household. In Gaza, the partner had tied itself down with very detailed procurement lists. Under oPt HF rules, it was then unable to reallocate savings towards additional items to adapt to individual household needs. Cluster coordinators could help partners think through proposed activities to ensure that oPt HF applicants consider how best to ensure that these are relevant to people's needs.

### Multi-sector programming

A number of interviewees argued that multi-sector programming would be highly relevant, particularly in the H2 area of Hebron, where there is a clearly defined vulnerable population in need of a range of services as well as protection. In summer 2018, OCHA and a number of humanitarian partners conducted a multi-sector needs assessment in H2. However, one interviewee argued that, although this covered all the relevant sectors, it did not explore inter-sectoral connections, which would be required to deliver multi-sectoral programming. Another interviewee highlighted Gaza as another geographical area where multi-sectoral interventions would be highly relevant, for example, to address malnutrition amongst women in hard to reach areas.

The oPt HF is able to fund multi-sector projects and, while it has done so in some cases, it has not actively promoted multi-sector programming. A number of interviewees pointed out that the main obstacle was the lack of a formal mechanism to review multi-sector proposals. The oPt HF's approach to funding the highest scoring projects, regardless
of the cluster, rather than allocating funding by cluster might also have dissuaded partners from submitting proposals that cut across clusters (section 3.1.3 discusses the oPt HF’s different approaches to funding allocations in more detail). One cluster coordinator argued that this was because partners would be likely to submit proposals to two or three clusters, hoping that at least one would be scored sufficiently highly to secure funding. However, allocating funding through cluster envelopes also acts as a disincentive to inter-cluster collaboration, unless the oPt HF makes specific provision for multi-cluster envelopes.

**Challenge:** The cluster system is designed to operate in sectoral siloes. Despite the inter-cluster coordination group, this makes it challenging to support multi-sectoral programming, whether multi-purpose cash or funding multi-cluster projects through CBPFs

**Grant size**

82. During a visit from the CBPF-Section in New York in March 2018, there was a discussion at the AB meeting about the inefficiencies of having to process 43 grants for an allocation of US$ 11.7 million (averaging around US$ 272,000 per grant), both at headquarters and country levels. Following this, during the second standard allocation in 2018, the oPt HF raised the minimum grant size to US$ 240,000. This was not only a way of reducing the transaction costs of processing a large number of grants but also of managing risks better. This was because it would rule out small and potentially high-risk NGOs from accessing funds directly since they would not be able to demonstrate their capacity to manage the larger grants. However, they could still receive funds as the partners of larger INGOs and NNGOs.

83. As described in section 3.3.2 below, the minimum grant size has been an obstacle for small NNGOs, even though they might be best placed to deliver humanitarian assistance. It has also been difficult to promote partnerships with larger NGOs in order to help smaller NNGOs to access funding. This is partly because the short timeframe for proposal submission and project implementation does not provide enough time to set up partnership agreements. Also, some sectors and activities (such as procurement) are better able to reach the minimum threshold than others. Protection projects, in particular, are not costly and partners have had to try to increase their activities in order to justify a grant of US$240,000. As a result, a couple of cluster coordinators called for greater flexibility in the minimum grant size based on the sector and type of activities.

3.1.3. **Transparent identification of high-quality projects**

84. The oPt HF operational manual outlines the workflow for SAs. The process has evolved over the evaluation period as stakeholders have tried to devise the most appropriate approach to selecting the best projects for funding. One change has been in the process for developing the allocation strategy. The 2017 version of the oPt operational manual states that the HC will work with existing coordination mechanisms to develop the strategy. OCHA would support the strategy development, with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) reviewing the draft before the HC presented it to the AB for inputs. This is based on global guidance. The 2019 version of the operational manual states that the HFU prepares the allocation strategy paper, supervised by OCHA’s HoO and in consultation with OCHA’s Inter-Cluster Coordinator (who may request inputs from the ICCG). Currently, the HC plays the main role in setting the broad priorities that the HFU incorporates into the strategy paper. Cluster coordinators then use these priorities as a guide to work with members on identifying cluster-specific priorities. A few interviewees argued for greater involvement of cluster coordinators in the initial stages and for finding a way to ensure that NNGOs have a voice earlier on in strategy development.

85. Most interviewees felt that the strategic priorities identified by the oPt HF across two SAs and three RAs in 2018 were in line with their analysis of needs and priorities. They also found that priorities in the allocation strategy papers were tightly focused by sector, activity and location. Thus, the allocations were expected to have the greatest impact and to fill critical gaps. However, there was some concern that health needs in the West Bank had not been recognized as

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[58] OCHA (2018e) oPt Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board Meeting, 22 March 2018
A priority because they relate to people’s inability to access life-saving services, which is a less visible protection issue than the acute health needs in Gaza. The food security sector had also challenged the decision not to fund food security activities in Gaza from the first SA in 2019. A CERF grant in early 2019 was directed to food security in the West Bank so there was an assumption that the oPt HF’s first SA would finance food security activities in Gaza. However, this also focused on the West Bank. Section 4.2.2 discusses the issue of CERF and oPt HF complementarity in further detail.

86. A major change in the allocation process was the shift, in 2017, from having an open competition, with the highest scoring projects receiving funding regardless of the cluster to having cluster-specific funding envelopes. This was based on lessons learned from previous allocations. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. The open competition is a way to identify the highest quality projects but several cluster coordinators were concerned that, although their review committees were strict in scoring projects, other clusters were less strict so the latter’s projects would receive a higher score and have a greater chance of being funded. The fund manager participated in review committees to ensure that scoring was fair across the clusters but the perception persisted. There is also the risk that some key activities within a cluster will remain unfunded because the projects do not receive a sufficiently high score in the open competition. As a result, some cluster coordinators preferred to have set funding envelopes. This meant that they knew how much funding was available and could ensure that projects addressed the full range of cluster priorities. However, depending on strategic priorities, some clusters might be excluded from these funding envelopes, such as education in the first SA in 2018 and food security and WASH in Gaza in the first SA in 2019.

87. Once the allocation strategy document has been agreed, it is launched with a deadline for the submission of proposals. The clusters have review committees to score proposals, based on a scorecard. Committee composition varies by cluster but there is generally at least one representative of each type of stakeholder (NNGO, INGO, UN agency, the HFU and the cluster coordinator). A couple of clusters mentioned the participation of the gender focal point as well. The HFU’s presence on the committee is critical for ensuring fairness and transparency. One cluster noted that committee members are elected and that members are rotated for each allocation, which is good practice. There was some discussion about the participation of the cluster lead agency (usually a UN agency) in the review committees and the extent to which this was necessary to ensure adequate technical input. It is helpful that UN agencies are not entitled to more representation than other actors but the protection cluster, which has several Areas of Responsibility (AoRs), identified this as problematic. This is because each AoR is a different technical field and led by a different UN agency. Having one review committee for all protection projects, regardless of the AoR, risks limiting the technical capacity available to assess different types of projects. This suggests that the protection cluster should consider options for bringing in the required technical expertise while maintaining fair representation for different partners.

88. In accordance with global CBPF policy, the HFU and clusters do not share the scoring criteria with applicants in advance although this had led to some complaints from partners. A more widespread complaint (from UN agencies and NGOs) was about the lack of feedback on why proposals had been rejected. The review committees do note the reasons for rejecting each proposal so it would be fairly straightforward for the HFU to share these with each applicant. Like other CBPFs, the oPt HF has a complaints mechanism in place so partners who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the allocation process can contact OCHA. Throughout the evaluation period, the HFU has outlined the complaints mechanism in each allocation strategy document. OCHA undertakes to review and address all complaints and, if necessary, to raise issues with the HC for him to take a decision or action.

**Challenge**: Applicants that had their proposals rejected were generally dissatisfied with the level of feedback on why they had not received funding. They felt that this was important both for transparency as well as learning, so that they could improve future applications.
3.1.4. The use of cash and vouchers in line with Grand Bargain commitments

89. The oPt has the requirements that make cash-based programming feasible in place, including banking systems and mechanisms for card transactions as well as functioning local markets. The Palestinian Authority provides cash and other assistance as part of a social protection system though payments can be irregular. WFP complements this with payments through a voucher system and has gathered evidence that this provides an important safety net. Nevertheless, cash-based programming in oPt remains limited and there are a number of reasons for this.

90. One reason is that donors have traditionally supported UNRWA and WFP to provide imported in-kind food assistance. This can be an appropriate modality in certain areas, such as for Bedouins in the West Bank who have limited access to markets. Also, UNRWA provides food assistance to over one million refugees in the Gaza Strip[64] and it has been argued that local markets do not have the capacity to meet such a high demand. Although some donors, such as ECHO, are advocating increasingly for cash-based programming, humanitarian funding has generally been limited. The 2018 HRP requested US$ 95 million to address food insecurity and US$34 million for temporary shelter cash assistance (TSCA) for those still displaced since the 2014 hostilities. As of November 2018, this was only 18 per cent funded and UNRWA stopped the distribution of TCSA in the second half of 2018. In the food security sector, UNRWA sought $63.6 million to provide short-term employment opportunities to over 54,000 people, which would have helped to address the 55 per cent rate of unemployment in the Gaza Strip. However, this received less than 10 per cent funding. Other humanitarian actors requested US$ 5.7 million to provide cash for livelihoods but had received just US$1.1 million as of November 2018.[65]

91. One potential reason for the limited number of cash-based programs is donor concern about funding going to prescribed individuals and/or organizations. However, it is possible to put in place a range of checks to ensure that only the intended recipients benefit from cash assistance. This includes checks through the banking system and having identity checks when recipients use cards to spend the money. There are also concerns that unconditional cash transfers could create protection risks. This is because the declining economic situation has meant that families have gone into debt and rent arrears.[64] If they have cash available, individuals or their families could face threats. In addition, large numbers of aid agency staff are involved in the provision of in-kind food assistance and they are concerned about losing their jobs if there is a large-scale move towards cash-based programming (although WFP re-trained its staff when it shifted some of its assistance from food to vouchers). Therefore, they have created pressure to maintain the current system. Aid recipients, too, are reluctant to move away from in-kind to cash-based assistance due to a variety of concerns.

92. The oPt HF has financed cash-based programming although it has not actively promoted the modality. Since early 2018, the HFU has attached an annex on its minimum requirements for cash-based programming to each SA strategy document. This includes requiring independent post-distribution monitoring. CBPFs have only recently started tracking their funding for cash-based programming through the GMS. In 2018, the oPt HF reported that 19 per cent of its funding was for programs that used cash as a modality whereas the largest proportion of the oPt HF’s funding was directed at health and protection activities. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified an innovative example of an oPt-HF financed voucher program (see Box 1).

[64] https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/more-one-million-people-gaza-half-population-territory-may-not-have
[65] Data from https://www.ochaopt.org/content/food-insecurity-opt-13-million-palestinians-gaza-strip-are-food-insecure
Box 1: Changing lives through the provision of e-vouchers[

The oPt HF financed CRS to provide e-vouchers to 1,800 households identified with the help of the Ministry of Social Development as the most vulnerable in Gaza governorate. With USAID funding, CRS had worked on designing an e-voucher system since 2017 in partnership with the same technical company as WFP. It also coordinated the voucher amount with WFP to avoid disparities across different beneficiary households. Recipients are able to choose from 24,000 items at 15 supermarkets (cigarettes and other items with adverse health effects are excluded). CRS is able to offer this wide choice because it uses barcodes that it has entered into an electronic system that also covers locally produced goods such as eggs. It has also designed an algorithm to check prices across the supermarkets involved in the scheme, thereby ensuring that recipients get value for money. WFP was able to use CRS’s barcode system to expand the items available to its beneficiaries as well.

The voucher program has transformed the lives of recipients who had been using negative coping mechanisms such as begging or relying on neighbours for food. Instead, they were able to meet the family’s food and other basic needs through a mechanism that confers choice, flexibility (since recipients could choose to spend the voucher in small amounts over the month or at one time) and dignity. CRS’s post-distribution monitoring showed that the program had a positive impact on women’s decision-making roles since they were the ones who did the supermarket shopping. In some cases, women had provided their husbands with lists to do the shopping, secure in the knowledge that it was not possible for them to spend the money on cigarettes or other harmful items. In other cases, the voucher encouraged the family as a whole to go shopping together.

While this is an innovative program, it is important to note that CRS developed the technology with longer-term USAID funding that was later cut. Also, the oPt HF was only able to fund six months of voucher distributions. Without continued assistance, there is a high risk that recipient families will revert to negative coping mechanisms. However, it is positive that the system remains in place so that it can be activated or expanded in an emergency.

3.2. Effectiveness and efficiency of processes to allocate and disburse funding

3.2.1. Efficiency and timeliness of oPt HF allocation and disbursement processes

Based on the global CBPF operational handbook, the oPt HF operational manual outlines the workflow for both SAs and RAs.[68] Unlike some other CBPFs (such as Somalia and South Sudan), the oPt HF does not provide an indicative number of working days for each step in the operational manual. Instead, when reporting on timeliness as part of the CPF in the 2018 annual report, the HFU used the global average target of 50 days for SAs and 20 days for RAs. The indicator used is the number of days from project submission to the implementing partner’s signature of the grant agreement (see table 6 below).

Table 6 shows that the average number of days for all indicators, particularly disbursement, fell over the evaluation timeframe. The time taken to process RAs improved considerably in 2017 and 2018, compared with 2015-16. This coincides with the oPt HF’s shift from making emergency grants on a rolling basis to individual partners to strategic allocations to a number of partners. The improvement in the oPt HF’s speed was reflected in interviews; oPt HF partners, whether NNGOs or UN agencies, regarded the process as timely and unproblematic. An NNGO also mentioned that a project revision process had been timely. However, a couple of interviewees suggested that the lack of deadlines for comments by clusters and for partners to respond to comments could lead to delays. In South Sudan, by contrast, there are deadlines for comments and responses via the GMS and failure to meet deadlines could affect partner performance negatively.

[67] Photo from oPt HF (2019a) occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2018, courtesy CRS
Funding volumes also increased as the overall contributions to the fund increased in 2017 and the number of NNGO projects receiving direct funding more than doubled, from eight funded projects in 2015 to 19 in 2017. However, it was frequently noted that they have access to some of the most vulnerable and difficult to reach populations.

International organizations have particular privileges that enable them to import particular items, notably fuel and dual-use medical items. Among UN agencies, UNRWA has a unique function and has provided material relief to Palestinian refugees since 1950. It provides social welfare and public services, including health and education, on a long-term basis, is a major employer and indirectly contributes heavily to the Palestinian economy. Funding to UNRWA contracted sharply in 2018 with the US scaling back and ultimately cutting all funding, resulting in a short-term funding crisis.

During the evaluation period, the oPt HF increasingly prioritized funding for NNGOs. In 2015, NNGO participation in the HRP process was noted to be low, limiting their ability to access the oPt HF. The fund has subsequently taken measures to facilitate greater access including awarding higher scores at the proposal review stage for NNGOs and international actors partnering with them, and providing regular training and ad hoc informal support on registration and application processes (see section 3.3.2). Pass-through funding with no obvious added value to the final implementing partner is excluded in the allocation process. As a result of the oPt HF’s measures to increase NNGO access to funding, the number of NNGO projects receiving direct funding more than doubled, from eight funded projects in 2015 to 19 in 2017 and 18 in 2018. Funding volumes also increased as the overall contributions to the fund increased in 2017 and 2018. NNGOs valued the oPt HF as an important source of funding.

### Table 6: Average numbers of days for oPt HF allocation processes, 2015-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key steps in the allocation process</th>
<th>Standard Allocation/Reserve Allocation</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal submission to IP signature of grant agreement</td>
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<td>RA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal submission to disbursement</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer signature to disbursement</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal submission to signature of grant agreement</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3. The promotion of best-placed partners and support for localization

#### 3.3.1. Identifying and supporting the best-placed partners to meet humanitarian needs

95. The oPt HF explicitly states its commitment to select the best-placed partners based on their comparative advantage. A range of context specific factors and constraints influences this comparative advantage. Notably, there is a long established Palestinian civil society with roots in human rights monitoring and advocacy and social and economic development. NNGOs interviewed noted in several cases that they had pivoted into humanitarian programming from their more traditional longer-term objectives as a result of reduced funding opportunities for development and human rights work. NNGOs also face a growing range of restrictions including campaigns of “delegitimization” and restrictions imposed both by the Palestinian Authority and de-facto authorities in Gaza. Therefore, while NNGOs are well established and physically present, they face a range of operational restrictions, and capacity and funding constraints. However, it was frequently noted that they have access to some of the most vulnerable and difficult to reach populations.

96. Many INGOs and UN agencies also have a long-established presence with a high degree of specialization in some cases. International organizations have particular privileges that enable them to import particular items, notably fuel and dual-use medical items. Among UN agencies, UNRWA has a unique function and has provided material relief to Palestinian refugees since 1950. It provides social welfare and public services, including health and education, on a long-term basis, is a major employer and indirectly contributes heavily to the Palestinian economy. Funding to UNRWA contracted sharply in 2018 with the US scaling back and ultimately cutting all funding, resulting in a short-term funding crisis.

97. During the evaluation period, the oPt HF increasingly prioritized funding for NNGOs. In 2015, NNGO participation in the HRP process was noted to be low, limiting their ability to access the oPt HF. The fund has subsequently taken measures to facilitate greater access including awarding higher scores at the proposal review stage for NNGOs and international actors partnering with them, and providing regular training and ad hoc informal support on registration and application processes (see section 3.3.2). Pass-through funding with no obvious added value to the final implementing partner is excluded in the allocation process. As a result of the oPt HF’s measures to increase NNGO access to funding, the number of NNGO projects receiving direct funding more than doubled, from eight funded projects in 2015 to 19 in 2017 and 18 in 2018. Funding volumes also increased as the overall contributions to the fund increased in 2017 and 2018. NNGOs valued the oPt HF as an important source of funding.

[69] Data obtained from the GMS to ensure consistency and also because the annual reports do not provide data for all the years under evaluation. It should be noted that the 2018 annual report states that the number of days from proposal submission to IP signature was 37 days for SAs and 20 days for RAs, which is within the global average target.

[70] The 2017 HF annual report states for example: “Ultimately, the determination of whether national or international NGO or UN agency are supported through the oPt HF is determined by the comparative advantage of each organization to deliver the articulated response.” oPt HF (2018) occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2017

[71] “Delegitimization” is led by civil society networks and organizations often lobbying in donor countries to allege violations of counter-terrorism legislation and international law, or political action against Israel. This has a range of effects including donor de-funding and increased scrutiny of prospective partners; closure of bank accounts by Israeli banks; and reputational damage to targeted organizations. See: https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-operations-undermined-delegitimization-access-restrictions-and-administrative


[73] Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950.

[74] The 2017 HRP for example lists the oPt HF as one of the means by which humanitarian actors in oPt are increasing their support to local and national actors in the context of their Grand Bargain commitments. OCHA (2016a) Humanitarian Response Plan 2016- oPt

Figure 7: Percentage of funds allocated per type of partner, 2015-2018

98. Figure 7 shows the percentage of overall funding by type of partner. Since (as noted above), the oPt HF is committed to funding the best-placed partners, the proportion of funds allocated to different types of partners can vary from year to year. While the percentage going directly to NGOs has remained at a third or less each year, the proportion of funds received by INGOs has varied considerably, from 71 per cent in 2015 to 29 per cent in 2017. Similarly, the percentage of funding allocated to UN agencies has ranged widely from just 3 per cent in 2015 to 40 per cent in 2017.

99. The wide variation in funding awarded to UN agencies and INGOs may be linked to specific funding decisions that take into consideration the comparative advantage of these partners and the particular needs prioritized in allocation papers. Notably, in the context of a high number of trauma-related injuries resulting from the Israeli response to the GMR, the first and second RAs in 2018 prioritized healthcare in the Gaza strip. An INGO uniquely specialized in providing trauma care and with a strong track record of successfully importing medical supplies received a total of $1.9 million for three projects across the first and second RAs to deploy emergency trauma specialists and procure drugs and medical supplies. The third RA in 2018 prioritized the provision of fuel to enable the continued functioning of critical healthcare and WASH services. UNRWA is the only organization allowed to import VAT exempt fuel into Gaza and therefore was the only eligible applicant. Both allocations proved somewhat controversial in different ways. A number of interviewees, including AB members, challenged the justification for humanitarian funds being used to bridge a funding gap for fuel that was effectively the result of a political dispute between the de facto authorities in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority. However, ultimately, the majority of respondents indicated that these decisions provided evidence of the oPt HF prioritizing the best placed partners and that the fund had managed to balance this with Grand Bargain commitments to localization.

100. During the evaluation period there has been a significant increase in the number of projects funded by the oPt HF, from 29 in both 2015 and 2016, to 43 in 2017 and 52 in 2018. This represents a 48 per cent increase in the number of projects funded between 2016 and 2017 and a further 21 per cent increase in 2018. The risk spread of projects has remained relatively stable, however, with between two thirds and three quarters each year rated medium risk. In each year, less than 20 per cent have been high risk. The HFU has coped well to date with the increased volume of projects and maintained a robust approach to managing risk (as described in section 2.2). Several contributing donors particularly commented on this.


[77] Although GMS data shows that one ineligible partner received funding in 2017, the partner was only a medium-risk partner at the time. The data used for figure 9 reflects a subsequent change in the partner’s risk rating on the GMS.
3.3.2. Inclusion of, and support for, local and national actors

101. Historically, NNGOs have faced a number of structural disadvantages in meeting eligibility criteria to access the oPt HF, in navigating the competitive proposal review and selection process, and in having a seat at the decision-making table. As noted in the previous section, the HFU has made serious and substantial efforts to address these challenges. One approach is to weight the project review process to support access for NNGOs. At first, up to 10 of a possible 100 points in the scoring system were awarded when the applicant could demonstrate that it was an NNGO or was partnering with an NNGO. This led to some international partners gaming the system by citing the names of NNGOs in their proposals without the knowledge of the partners, or without intending to have a meaningful partnership. A revised version of the scoring required a) evidence of partnership; b) demonstration that national partners are involved throughout the proposal development process; and c) showing that the NNGO partner will receive 50 per cent or more of the funds. Each of these scores one-third of a maximum of 10 points. Project proposals are also expected to demonstrate the added value of partnerships, including referring to the joint PNGO and AIDA partnership principles. NNGO representation on cluster review panels can also help to screen out more dubious partnerships. Despite these efforts, the quality of partnerships remained somewhat problematic. One particular point of concern was that the requirement for over 50 per cent funding to NNGO partners might disadvantage projects with high levels of procurement done by an international partner and also protection projects where implementing partners do not have high costs.

102. The HF has invested in capacity building trainings on submitting, managing and implementing projects in order to support NNGO access to the fund. In 2018 for example, the HFU provided two trainings in Gaza and one in the West Bank and planned to conduct six trainings in 2019. In addition, NNGOs interviewed often remarked on the HFU's openness and responsiveness in providing ad hoc guidance and responding to queries.

103. NNGOs identified a number of practical barriers to access that remain, including continued challenges in presenting sufficiently convincing proposals and the US$ 240,000 minimum grant size, that can deter smaller NNGOs. NNGOs based in Gaza faced a particular disadvantage in having to register in the West Bank, which is administratively complex and costly, rather than Gaza in order to avoid paying taxes to the de facto authorities. This created an incentive to partner with international organizations in order to avoid having to undertake this challenging registration process.

104. NNGOs are also included in the oPt HF’s prioritization processes and governance. Notably, project review panels include NNGOs and PNGO representatives. The PNGO network also has a seat on the Advisory Board. NNGO interviewees mentioned some challenges with respect to their involvement in cluster processes. Several indicated that they felt their knowledge and expertise were not adequately captured in cluster needs analysis and project prioritization processes leading to duplication and, in some cases, to funding organizations that might have passed the due diligence

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[78] “The added value of the partnership, in terms of access, technical expertise, monitoring, capacity building and clarity of project costs, must be demonstrated in the project proposal. The agreement should be based on joint PNGO and AIDA partnership principles.” oPt HF (2019b) Allocation Strategy Paper 2019 1st Standard Allocation, p14
process, but which had limited operational response capacity in reality. The prevailing use of English in cluster meetings was also noted as a potential barrier to inclusion.

105. NNGOs have periodically made complaints about funding decisions. The HFU, with the HC’s support, has taken a proactive approach to allowing NNGOs to discuss their concerns, which has helped to diffuse particular contentious issues and to clarify if and where there are real problems. In 2018, for example, the HC and HFU met with representatives from PNGO, AIDA and MAP to discuss NNGO grievances with respect to funds awarded to MAP under the first and second RAs.

106. While the oPt HF has invested serious effort and resources in pursuing commitments to localization, there are limits to the extent to which it can reasonably pursue this agenda further. Notably, oPt HF funding is short-term by design and due to the needs-driven and competitive nature of the fund, funding is inherently unpredictable from the recipient perspective. Therefore, longer-term tailored support to NNGOs is needed to complement the oPt HF’s efforts. Moreover, NGOs and civil society have their own competitive dynamics, of which the fund must be cognizant in order to avoid distorting incentives and entrenching unfair competitive advantages. For example, larger and more established NNGOs were highlighted as those most likely to secure funding. They, in turn, implement through smaller NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). The evaluation team’s visits to oPt HF-funded projects in the West Bank and Gaza confirmed this practice, with both INGOs and NNGOs relying on an ecosystem of CBOs to undertake community outreach work, in some cases without payment (see section 5.1 for details). In some cases the work of these smaller downstream organizations is not visible to the oPt HF, potentially replicating the same set of grievances that NNGOs have experienced with respect to international partners.

3.4. Delivering quality programming

3.4.1. Projects based on coordinated and participatory needs assessments

107. Determining and prioritizing needs in oPt is not straightforward. The crisis is first and foremost a human rights and protection crisis, within which needs are essentially developmental. However, normal developmental partnerships and programming are highly constrained, restricting international engagement to predominantly humanitarian programming to address chronic welfare needs. There are also significant disparities between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where in addition to the wider protection crisis, socio-economic indicators have deteriorated and acute needs periodically spike in response to outbreaks of conflict. For example, the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) notes that 67 per cent of refugees and 70 per cent of non-refugees in the Gaza Strip are moderately to severely food insecure, compared with 14 per cent of refugees and 10 per cent of non-refugees in the West Bank. Maintaining an appropriate balance between different orders of needs in the West Bank and Gaza is therefore challenging. Interviewees frequently referred to a working rule of thumb of a 70/30 split in resource requirements across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which they indicated felt “about right”. However, it is not clear when this split was determined or on what basis. oPt HF allocations tend to reflect the higher level of needs in Gaza, with the allocation strategy documents offering an analysis and justification for the funding decisions.

108. Measuring and assessing protection needs is particularly complex and challenging. There are many mechanisms to monitor protection and human rights violations in oPt. However, these do not necessarily translate readily into how this impacts on people’s lives (for example, what are the impacts if pregnant women are unable to access neonatal services due to travel restrictions and/or settler violence). Although interviewees referred to some specific assessments, including on mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) and child marriage as a negative coping mechanism, protection impacts and the appropriate programming responses are not routinely considered in some of the major sectoral assessments.

109. The annual HNO is a complex undertaking where clusters across the West Bank, Gaza and then at the national-level analyse multiple sources of information on needs, including refugee registration numbers as well as scheduled and ad hoc sectoral and thematic assessments. They then agree an overall number of people in need and commentary on

[83] For example, in 2018, the oPt HF allocated around 23 per cent of funding to the West Bank, a little less than the 25 per cent allocated in 2017. See oPt HF (2018) occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2017 and oPt HF (2019a) occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2018
the severity of needs as well as priority areas and issues. There are acknowledged gaps in the evidence base[84] and, in some cases, interviewees questioned the quality and inclusiveness of the analyses of the clusters and the ICCG. However, the oPt HF depends on the analysis of the clusters to guide funding prioritization.

110. The GMS project proposal template includes a box for partners to share information about the needs assessment(s) on which the project is based. A few NGO partners mentioned conducting needs assessments specifically for the oPt HF but highlighted the difficulty of doing this in the short timeframe between the allocation strategy launch and the deadline for the submission of proposals. One NGO works closely with affected communities but the short timeframe for developing proposals limited the scope to ensure community participation. Nevertheless, during a project visit to the H2 area of Hebron, the INGO’s CBO partner described how it had conducted a baseline needs assessment. Through this, it became clear that the main need was for protective materials due to settler violence. Beneficiaries had not articulated this initially because they did not realize that the INGO could provide these materials.

111. Needs are not always determined on the basis of measurable indicators but may also arise in response to system-level failures and gaps and the fund periodically responds on the basis of these "needs by default". A notable example is the fuel crisis in 2018, which was essentially a political dispute between the divided Palestinian authorities but which could have resulted in serious adverse humanitarian consequences. Another is the US funding cuts to UNRWA, which created a short-term acute funding crisis for ongoing programming. In these instances, the HC exercised judgment and used available evidence rather than basing decisions on coordinated and participatory needs assessments.

3.4.2. Identifying those most in need, including marginalized groups

112. As of 2019, the GMS project template requires partners seeking CBPF grants to provide a detailed description of the project’s target beneficiaries. Direct beneficiaries are disaggregated by age and gender and categorized by status (for example, refugees or returnees). Partners are also able to list the number of persons with disabilities (PwD) that the project will assist (disaggregated by age and gender). Sections on gender and protection mainstreaming provide further scope for partners to identify and describe how activities will respond to the specific needs of particularly vulnerable or marginalized groups. The HFU highlighted that it consults affected communities about partners’ beneficiary selection criteria to ensure that assistance is targeted at the most vulnerable.

**Good practice:** It is very positive that the HFU seeks to ensure that projects are assisting the most vulnerable during its monitoring visits. This emphasizes to partners that targeting those most in need and marginalized groups is a priority for the oPt HF.

113. In oPt, humanitarian agencies can access data on those most in need through the Palestinian Authority and a number of NGOs mentioned obtaining beneficiary lists in this way. An NNGO providing MHPSS in Gaza had severe cases referred to it by the Ministry of Health. As noted in the previous section, they may also conduct their own needs assessments. In addition, OCHA worked with humanitarian actors to establish the Vulnerability Profile Project (VPP) for Area C in the West Bank in 2013. The visualization tool includes information on a range of humanitarian indicators. OCHA updates this with information from a range of sources in order to ensure that the platform continues to present current and reliable information on Area C.[85]

114. NGO interviewees, in particular, outlined how they targeted assistance to the most vulnerable, including marginalized groups. One INGO had used criteria including family size and income, female-headed households, families with children under the age of five, and individuals with chronic disabilities and diseases, to target its assistance. It provided households with elderly people or PwD with an extra US$ 10 in assistance for transportation. An NNGO described the challenge of selecting beneficiaries when a large number are in need but there is only enough funding available to assist a few. This challenge of having to prioritize small amounts of funding to meet large-scale needs also arose in a focus group discussion with NNGOs in Gaza.

115. Although projects addressing protection concerns and gender-based violence tend to focus on women as the
most vulnerable group, NNGOs highlighted that men also face major risks in oPt. This is partly because they are more likely to be injured or killed during the GMR demonstrations but also because they are more likely to face protection risks from the Israeli authorities or settlers. However, this tends not to be recognized. For example, the 2018 HNO, which has a section on gender analysis and priority gender needs in oPt, focuses almost exclusively on women and girls. In this context, it is positive that the oPt HF had supported a project to provide MHPSS to men as well as women affected by the GMR in Gaza (see box 2 in section 5.1).

3.4.3. Taking account of gender, age, disability and mainstreaming protection

116. As outlined in section 3.4.1, the crisis in oPt is driven by violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and protection risks. This is reflected in HNO documents and, in the 2018 and 2019 HRPs, each cluster outlined how it was going to mainstream protection. Given the nature of the crisis, there have been a number of training sessions on protection mainstreaming and an INGO representative argued that there was a high level of awareness of the issue. A couple of interviewees also highlighted the proposal to have a protection focal point in each cluster in order to strengthen capacity for mainstreaming protection. This should benefit the oPt HF. As mentioned in the previous section, the GMS proposal template has a section in which partners describe how they plan to mainstream protection. However, at present, the protection cluster does not have the capacity to review this across all oPt HF proposals. Proposals in the GMS show that the extent to which partners demonstrate how they intend to mainstream protection in a given project (as opposed to citing relevant principles) varies. Therefore, it will be helpful to have systematic capacity across clusters to help applicants for oPt HF funding to strengthen how they mainstream protection.

117. It is positive that clusters in oPt have gender focal points although they are volunteers so their time and ability to engage with oPt HF allocation processes can be limited. The GMS proposal template included the IASC gender marker and, as of mid-2018, this has been updated to the GAM. Partners self-assess their own projects using a set of guiding criteria which then generates an overall code from 0-4. In addition, there is space in the project proposal for partners to justify their chosen marker. The gender focal point in the protection cluster trained NGOs on how to use the GAM as part of oPt HF training on the GMS. She had also participated in oPt HF project review committees for the first SA in 2019 to assess the gender component. A common challenge is that project proposals do not reflect the partner’s implementation accurately. This can be because partners do not know how to write about the good work that they do in practice or because partners are good at writing about mainstreaming gender and protection but this does not translate into practice. This highlights the importance of monitoring how partners are addressing gender, protection and diversity during implementation but this requires adequate capacity to assess what is being done. Another challenge with ensuring that projects address gender adequately is that this should involve behaviour change, which takes longer than six to 12-month humanitarian projects. This suggests that the humanitarian system as a whole needs consistent capacity to monitor change over time, particularly as there is a commitment to mainstreaming gender in the HRP.

118. The oPt HF 2018 annual report shows that 79 per cent of funding went to projects that scored 2a on the IASC Gender Marker, indicating that they were designed to contribute significantly to gender equality. The 2017 annual report does not present this data but, in 2016, 93 per cent of funding was for projects that scored 2a, with the remaining funding for projects that scored 2b, where the principal purpose of the project was to advance gender equality.

119. In 2019, the GMS introduced a new section for partners to report on the numbers of PwD that they plan to assist in project proposals. It was too early for reporting on this data but it is positive that this will be available from next year. There is a growing focus on disability in the oPt, at least partly due to the large numbers of people that have been injured by conflict in the Gaza Strip. In both 2018 and 2019, there was an orientation session on inclusion for the HRP process and there is a checklist for how aid agencies can mainstream disability in each cluster. This should help oPt HF appli-
cants to improve how they assist PwD.

120. The oPt HF has funded specific projects to provide medical assistance or MHPSS to those injured and disabled in the GMR, which has made a significant difference to people’s lives (see boxes 2 and 3 in section 5.1). The funding to an INGO to bring in specialist medical teams to carry out reconstructive surgery is a particularly good example because it filled a gap in the provision of medical assistance to those injured in the GMR and at risk of long-term disability. However, the extent to which projects not aimed specifically at PwD took account of them, particularly those with mental disabilities, could be variable. A disability focal point who was an observer in the oPt HF project review process noted that there is only one question to address gender, AAP and disability. It is positive that the oPt HF has brought in a disability focal point to review proposals although this was a heavy workload for one individual and there was often a frustrating lack of detail on inclusion in proposals. An INGO specializing in inclusion has developed a disability, gender and age marker tool. It has used this to self-assess its own projects to identify action points and argued that this could help to strengthen the implementation of cross-cutting issues across oPt HF projects.

Good practice: The oPt HF’s inclusion of gender and disability focal points in the project review process is positive because it ensures that these cross-cutting issues are taken into consideration. It also offers the chance to strengthen mainstreaming. There is potential to replicate this good practice across CBPFs although this is likely to require dedicated capacity.

121. Interviewees placed less emphasis on age as a cross-cutting issue. However, there were indications that partners used both age and disability as criteria to identify those most in need of assistance when they were selecting beneficiaries. The project visits also provided a good example of how a partner had responded specifically to the needs of the elderly and disabled when rehabilitating houses in the H2 area of Hebron (see box 5 in section 5.1 for project details). This included ensuring that the main access to houses met international standards for PwD, for example by installing a ramp. Although almost all the houses in the H2 area have Turkish toilets, when rehabilitating these, the INGO installed European toilets for the elderly because these are easier to use. In some specific cases, the partner installed grab rails in the houses.

3.4.4. Accountability to affected populations (AAP)

122. The GMS project template requires project partners to describe how they will involve beneficiaries in different stages of the project cycle; what information they will provide to the target population; and what feedback and complaints mechanisms will be in place. Although partners do not always provide detailed information, the project visits and FGDs with beneficiaries revealed a high level of satisfaction with communication from oPt HF partners and opportunities for feedback. This was mainly due to the involvement of CBOs in community outreach and two-way communication with beneficiaries (see section 5.1 for further details of individual projects). The CBOs played a critical role in beneficiary selection, needs assessment and obtaining feedback.

123. Partners described a range of complaints and feedback mechanisms that they had put in place and also how they responded to complaints. One had made use of social media and provided an email address that beneficiaries could contact. A more innovative approach was its online case management system, developed in response to beneficiary requests. Through this, women could request help from lawyers, social workers or case managers remotely. Another NNGO had used a feedback form during project implementation although it had not conducted an analysis across the forms to identify if there was a pattern of complaints or issues raised. Its beneficiaries were also able to raise concerns through the field engineer. One NNGO had a policy for handling complaints that included an investigation committee on its board.

124. Although there were several good examples of AAP, particularly the work of CBOs, a couple of cluster coordinators highlighted weaknesses in AAP mechanisms across the humanitarian system. One problem identified was that some partners believed that having a beneficiary workshop at the beginning of the project or conducting occasional FGDs was sufficient to ensure AAP. As a result, one suggested that the ICCG could do more to focus on joint, system-wide initiatives. The protection cluster in Gaza had used its engagement in oPt HF processes to map partner access and feedback mechanisms. It was also focusing on ensuring that AAP was a fundamental part of projects during the review process, not simply a tick box exercise.
3.5. Outputs

125. CBPF annual reports provide data on outputs of the projects that they have funded by cluster. The outputs and achievements listed in the reports vary by project and over time, making it impossible to aggregate them. For example, the oPt HF 2017 annual report describes a project in Gaza to provide vulnerable children with better access to basic education. As a result, 1,000 children (500 boys and 500 girls) aged eight to 12 were able to access basic education in 2017. In 2018, the oPt HF funded two education projects with a protection focus in the West Bank. One provided school-based MHPSS to vulnerable children, their parents and school staff. The other expanded protective presence for children at risk while commuting to school.

126. Rather than replicate output data from the oPt HF annual reports, this section focuses on summarizing the number of people assisted over the evaluation period. Figure 9 shows the number of people receiving oPt HF-funded assistance by cluster. The health and WASH clusters assisted the largest numbers of people, particularly in 2017 and 2018 (in 2018, these two sectors received the highest levels of funding). The 2017 beneficiary numbers are unusually high because they are the sum of beneficiary numbers across all oPt HF projects, regardless of duplication in beneficiary populations. The 2018 beneficiary numbers are not as high because CBPFs changed how they reported results. Rather than reporting results based on the year in which the funding was allocated, the annual reports showed results reported in 2018, regardless of whether the projects had been funded in 2017 or 2018. Nevertheless, the 2018 beneficiary numbers also include duplication.

![Figure 9: Number of oPt HF beneficiaries by cluster, 2015-2018](image-url)

127. Figure 10 below provides an overview of the total number of people targeted and reached with oPt HF support from 2015-18. As with figure 9 above, the totals for the number of people targeted and assisted in 2017 and 2018 are disproportionately large because they are the sum of people across all oPt HF projects and do not take account of significant duplication. For example, in 2017, two UNRWA projects targeted two million people across the Gaza Strip and it is highly probably that there was considerable, if not complete, overlap between the beneficiaries of these projects. In some CBPFs, such as South Sudan, the HFU conducts a manual exercise to remove duplications and arrive at a more accurate number of people assisted. At global level, the CBPF-Section has developed guidance on aggregating beneficiary numbers across projects while avoiding double counting. It is understandable that the oPt HFU, being a small

team, has not had the capacity to undertake such as an exercise, particularly when it was managing significantly more funding in 2018. However, it would be helpful if the HFU adopts the methodology to avoid double counting since it has increased staffing capacity.

**Figure 10: Total numbers of people targeted and reached by the oPt HF, 2015-2018**

![Graph showing the numbers of people targeted and reached by the oPt HF, 2015-2018.](image)

128. Table 7 below disaggregates the number of people reached by the oPt HF across the evaluation period by gender and age.

**Table 7: Total numbers of people reached by the oPt HF by gender and age category, 2015-2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>52,107</td>
<td>53,233</td>
<td>39,251</td>
<td>55,596</td>
<td>200,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>133,457</td>
<td>131,656</td>
<td>142,382</td>
<td>145,104</td>
<td>552,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,405,136</td>
<td>1,392,729</td>
<td>2,483,544</td>
<td>2,544,517</td>
<td>7,825,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>646,944</td>
<td>632,416</td>
<td>815,499</td>
<td>641,289</td>
<td>2,736,148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4. Outcomes: In what ways do CBPFs contribute to the outcomes of strengthening humanitarian coordination and leadership?

The 2015 Policy Instruction anticipates that CBPFs will contribute to the achievement of three outcomes, i.e., improved response, better coordination and strengthened leadership. This section focuses on the oPt HF’s contribution to the latter two outcomes while the next section examines its contribution to improving humanitarian response.

4.1. Better coordination

129. The oPt HF has contributed to enhancing coordination and collaboration in a number of ways that are discussed in further detail below.

4.1.1. Increased collaboration between humanitarian actors

130. As outlined in section 2.4.1, the oPt HF AB provides an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to engage in discussions on strategic issues as well as more detailed fund management issues. Having all the oPt HF donors around the table and ECHO as an observer since the end of 2018 provides an opportunity to avoid duplication between the oPt HF and bilateral funding.

131. The AB also offers both NNGOs and INGOs a ‘seat at the table’. Minutes of AB meetings demonstrate that NNGO representatives were able to voice their views and that these were considered, which is not always the case in other contexts. The HC and oPt HF have encouraged partnerships and collaboration between INGOs and NNGOs. The AB meeting in April 2019 discussed the issue, which had been tabled by the PNGO representative, highlighting the efforts made by the oPt HF. The meeting minutes also provide an example of coordination between an INGO and NNGOs on a joint proposal for the oPt HF although this had resulted in a misunderstanding with a couple of NNGOs. Previous sections have noted good examples of collaboration between NGOs and CBOs to strengthen community engagement and AAP in oPt HF projects. Partners in the health sector also provided examples of coordinating between themselves to provide referral services. Thus, the oPt HF contributes to increased collaboration between a range of different partners.

4.1.2. Strengthened coordination mechanisms

132. Cluster coordinators were generally positive about the oPt HF’s contribution to strengthening their role and the functioning of clusters. As some pointed out, it is the one funding mechanism over which clusters have influence and so they are able to ensure that it meets key HRP priorities and fills funding gaps. It also incentivizes participation in clusters, particularly by NNGOs. This is particularly because partners are scored on their level of cluster participation during the project review process. One cluster coordinator felt that oPt HF processes created a closer relationship between coordinator and members. This is because the cluster coordinator can provide support, particularly to smaller NGOs, to navigate the application process. This then makes NGOs more inclined to share information with the cluster. NGO partners concurred with the view of cluster coordinators that oPt HF processes incentivize participation in clusters and strengthen coordination across implementers. They particularly highlighted that this coordination helped them to avoid duplication.

133. As noted in section 2.4.3, the cluster architecture in oPt is complex, reflecting the fragmented nature of the context. This results in the need for inter-cluster coordination at three levels – Gaza, the West Bank and national. There was a suggestion that, although the ICCG in Gaza is active, the West Bank and national ICCGs had been somewhat dormant or less active. There is a limit to what the oPt HF can do to address such systemic or architectural challenges although it relies on cluster and inter-cluster coordination operating effectively. However, directing more funding towards multi-sector programs that require clusters to work together on project reviews could be an incentive for greater inter-cluster collaboration. In South Sudan, the ICCG plays a decisive role in establishing cluster funding envelopes but this approach has a number of challenges and would not be appropriate for the more complex architecture in oPt.

4.2. Strengthened leadership

4.2.1. HC’s engagement in the oPt HF

134. The HC’s leadership of the oPt HF is essential for the fund’s performance because he is ultimately responsible for providing strategic direction and for funding decisions. The current HC has been proactive in setting priorities for allocations and using the fund to support the HRP. In a sign of the extent to which the HC takes ownership of the fund, he has engaged directly with partners to address dissatisfaction with funding decisions. The HC valued the oPt HF as a mechanism for making resources available for emergency response quickly, particularly to the violence surrounding the GMR in 2018. The fund contributes to the HC’s coordination role because funding is a strong incentive for bringing actors around the table.

135. The HC has also played an active role in the HRP development process, pushing for the 2019 and 2020 HRPs to be much more focused on emergency response. One interviewee described how the HC had been willing to speak directly to cluster members to make the case for a reduced funding request for the HRP. This level of HC engagement is unusual. Since the oPt HF is closely aligned with the HRP and is an important mechanism for funding HRP priorities, the HC’s role in shaping the HRP also influences the fund’s operation.

136. In support of principled humanitarian assistance (discussed in section 5.2), the HC and OCHA have raised the issue of the confiscation and destruction of humanitarian assistance with the Israeli authorities. Both the current and previous HCs also sent letters to the authorities demanding the release of the confiscated equipment and materials. While this advocacy role extends beyond oPt HF-financed assistance, it is an important benefit for the fund.

137. As discussed in section 2.4.1, there have been occasions when HCs have asserted their leadership role and made some funding decisions with which the AB disagreed. Although donors accepted that HCs are the ultimate decision-makers on CBPF funding, some argued that in both the controversial decisions (to fund emergency fuel supplies for Gaza and to fund UNRWA at the beginning of 2018), more could have been done to engage the AB (for example, by convening an urgent meeting) and to provide feedback to it.

4.2.2. Strategic use of the oPt HF and complementarity with other funding modalities

138. As part of their leadership of CBPFs, HCs are expected to use the funds in a strategic manner, considering other funding mechanisms, particularly the CERF. This section begins by examining the extent to which oPt HF and CERF allocations have complemented each other. It then looks more broadly at the oPt HF in the context of bilateral funding.

139. As demonstrated by Table 3 and Table 8 below, there has been limited opportunity for using the oPt HF and CERF in a strategic manner since the CERF only made allocations in 2017, 2018 and 2019. While the oPt HF and CERF both funded the fuel crisis in Gaza in 2017, the oPt HF made a modest grant of $500,000 in April while the CERF provided $4.2 million in August. In 2018, the oPt HF responded very quickly to needs arising from the GMR, which started on 30 March, providing $2.2 million to address health and protection needs in April. The CERF responded to an agency appeal for $5.3 million to scale up interventions in response to the GMR in May, contributing a modest $1.2 million.

140. The largest CERF allocation to oPt was a US$ 15 million grant to UNRWA in March 2018 to cover its significant funding shortfall. During AB discussions of oPt HF funding for UNRWA in February, one donor underlined that the HF should be a last resort, when all other options have been exhausted. However, the meeting minutes make no mention of UNRWA seeking CERF funding. The CERF grant application detailed the oPt HF funding and explained that the CERF would complement this by covering mainly food assistance to Gaza, which was not included in the oPt HF funding.\[92\] The CERF grant financed both in-kind food distribution in Gaza and the electronic voucher program in the West Bank for five months. The documentary evidence suggests that the oPt HF filled a specific gap in UNRWA’s West Bank program (see section 2.4.1) while the CERF financed its food assistance to Palestinian refugees in both Gaza and the West Bank on a much larger scale.

Lessons: It would be good practice for the HC and AB members to take account of the potential for CERF RR funding when deciding on an RA, such as that to UNRWA or in response to the GMR.

141. In 2019, when the CERF UFE allocation coincided with the oPt HF's first SA, there was a significant opportunity to use the two funds according to their comparative advantage. However, the allocation processes were separate, with the HC discussing CERF funding with UN cluster lead agencies and the oPt HF going through its standard procedure. Although the HC and OCHA expected the cluster lead agencies to consult cluster coordinators about the CERF allocation, it appears that this did not happen. Three cluster coordinators in Gaza complained about the lack of consultation and information sharing by the cluster lead agencies. Even within OCHA, different sections managed the two processes. Although the SA strategy paper states that it has been developed to complement the CERF allocation, it is not explicit about the nature of the complementarity beyond mentioning that NGOs would be prioritized because the CERF can only fund UN agencies directly. The CERF grant application document provides details of oPt HF funding through the first SA and says that the HCT, through the HC’s leadership, will ensure the CERF grant will complement this.

142. An analysis of CERF-funded projects and the oPt HF allocation strategy shows that, in practice, the two funds supported different types of activities. For example, the CERF financed food security and livelihoods activities for Bedouin and herding communities in the West Bank whereas the oPt HF prioritized protection (legal assistance), WASH and shelter activities for these communities. Also, the CERF had a strong focus on health, funding five projects in the West Bank and Gaza, whereas the oPt HF was more focused on health interventions to mitigate the impact of the GMR in Gaza. This suggests that the funds avoided duplication but it was unclear to what extent they were complementary. This approach is in contrast to the 2019 Somalia Humanitarian Fund and CERF integrated allocation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: CERF and oPt HF Allocations, 2015-19</th>
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<tr>
<td>CERF Allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>oPt HF Allocation</td>
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143. Interviewees often expressed the view that there was very little development funding for oPt. However, although development funding to the Gaza Strip may be restricted, the perception of an absolute dearth of development funding does not correspond with the funding data. To the contrary, development funding to oPt remained in excess of $1.5 billion annually over the ten-year period between 2008 and 2017 (see figure 12 below). This picture is likely to have changed since the significant US funding cuts in 2018, the growing politicization of aid and the pressures of complying with counter-terrorism legislation but donors have not stopped development funding completely.

[95] CERF data from https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country and oPt HF allocation data from annual reports
144. Strategic analysis and project prioritization through the clusters does not appear to take account of development funding on a systematic basis although in many cases humanitarian and development funding sources are financing very similar types of projects. For example, some donor interviewees noted that they channelled development funds through partners participating in the HRP and two NGOs indicated that they received substantial development funding for very similar projects to those funded through the oPt HF. One cluster coordinator noted that they occasionally came across new facilities and projects funded by development actors they were not aware of but which addressed similar needs to those identified within the cluster. Interviewees suggested two main reasons for the lack of information about development funding in clusters. One was that members did not share information about their other sources of funding. The other was the absence of a forum for sharing information on development funding although, in principle, operational level coordination on these issues should come from Ministries. However, this is particularly problematic in Gaza due to the internal Palestinian divide.

145. Cluster analysis of funding coverage and gaps also did not appear to have full visibility of funding allocations from ECHO, one of the leading humanitarian donors to the crisis. In 2019, in particular, there were a number of instances of potential duplication. This was in part due to a delay in ECHO’s contracting process, which might have led partners to hedge their bets and submit applications to the oPt HF for the same projects. However, there are opportunities to improve coordination with major humanitarian donors both through the AB and at an operational level through cluster coordination.

5. Contribution to Improved Response and Operational Impact

This section examines the extent to which the oPt HF has contributed to improving humanitarian response (the third outcome anticipated in the 2015 Policy Instruction), including by supporting principled humanitarian action. It also assesses how the oPt HF has delivered the operational impact statement, i.e., the provision of timely, coordinated, principled assistance to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. The section draws on available evidence to respond to evaluation question 1 on the extent to which the fund has made a difference to people’s lives.

146. This report has already addressed a number of components of the operational impact statement. Section 3.2.1 discussed the timeliness of the oPt HF’s allocation and disbursement processes. Section 4.1 examined the fund’s contribution to strengthening coordination while section 3.1.1 outlined how the fund aligns with HRPs, which are designed to provide a coordinated response. Section 3.4.1 touched on the issue of whether projects are based on coordinated needs assessments. Since principled assistance has not been addressed by the evaluation questions examined in earlier sections of the report, this is covered in section 5.2 below.

147. Quality programming that takes account of gender, age, PwD and protection concerns and that is accountable to affected populations is essential for alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity. Sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 examined the extent to which the oPt HF is supporting these aspects of quality programming. Projects can contribute to maintaining human dignity in a variety of ways and Box 1 described an e-voucher program that offers choice and dignity to beneficiaries.

148. Humanitarian actors do not generally collect outcome and impact data for the often short-term projects that they implement and this is also the case with CBPF partners. Through the GMS, CBPFs have rolled out the 8+3 reporting format agreed as part of the Grand Bargain. However, it is up to partners to set outcome indicators in proposals and then report against them. A review of outcome statements and indicators in the GMS demonstrates that these are all output-focused, such as the number of “families with access to sufficient safe and affordable water” or “Improved access to adequate health care services to children in Gaza through appropriate provision of critically needed drugs, medical consumables and assistive devices”. As a result, the evaluation was unable to draw upon systematic evidence about the outcomes and impact of oPt HF projects.

149. The oPt HF, like all other CBPFs, contributes to the HRP’s strategic objectives. However, the indicators for monitoring these objectives are output indicators, such as the percentage of vulnerable people with access to safe drinking water or the percentage of assisted families reporting improvements in living conditions. Therefore, there is no systematic data on outcomes or impact at the response level either for the evaluation to use.

150. There is also no quantitative data on the number of lives saved or the alleviation of suffering or how humanitarian actors maintained human dignity for the humanitarian response as a whole although it is possible to use available evidence to infer the contribution of humanitarian assistance to these results. Data on how humanitarian assistance has made a difference to people’s lives is qualitative, such as success stories and individual project examples.

151. Given the data limitations outlined above, the section below uses mainly qualitative data to describe how the oPt HF has contributed to an improved humanitarian response and made a difference to people’s lives.

5.1. Improving humanitarian response and making a difference to people’s lives

152. This section draws on a mix of primary data (key informant interviews, project visits and FGDs with aid recipients) and secondary data (documents) to examine how the oPt HF has sought to address critical humanitarian needs in order to make a difference to people’s lives. The evaluation team visited four project sites – two in the West Bank and two in Gaza. One of the projects in the West Bank was implemented by an INGO while the other three were implemented by NGOs. All of the projects visited were current or had recently ended, enabling the team to gather real-time feedback from project partners and communities on the quality and effectiveness of the response. The team conducted gender-disaggregated FGDs with 73 key informants.

153. Before reviewing how the oPt HF has contributed to improving the humanitarian response, table 9 below summarizes its allocations from 2015-18. The fund's origin as an ERF that aimed to respond flexibly to needs as they arise is reflected in the fact that, in 2015 and 2016, it allocated emergency response funding on a rolling basis. This meant that individual partners could apply for funding as needed rather than the oPt HF making set RAs to a number of partners to respond to a specific emergency. This meant that the fund made a relative high number of allocations in 2015, in particular. Nevertheless, the proportion of funding channelled through these emergency grants was modest. This is because the grants were usually around US$ 200,000-250,000 (one exception was a grant of almost US$500,000 to UNICEF in 2016 for emergency water distribution in Area C). The proportion of funding channelled through RAs in 2017 was greater than funding provided through the single SA because of two relatively large RAs of US$ 2.5 million and US$ 2.2 million to respond to the Gaza Crisis Urgent Funding Appeal (see Table 3).

Table 9: Summary of oPt HF allocations from 2015-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Allocations ($ million)</th>
<th>Allocations (% by SA/RA)</th>
<th>Ras</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.1. Summary of findings from FGDs

154. FGD participants expressed a high-level of appreciation for oPt HF projects. One notable and common feature of the feedback was an appreciation not only of the material support provided, but also a deeply felt gratitude because the projects represented a sense of solidarity with people in a context of growing despair. Being included in projects gave beneficiaries in the West Bank, in particular, a sense that their needs and situation were not forgotten.

155. A second common theme among all of the projects visited was the very high rating that beneficiaries gave to the targeting and communication provided by the implementing NGOs. In all four projects, the NGOs employed CBOs embedded in affected communities to identify households most in need according to their targeting criteria. Beneficiaries found these CBOs and the implementing NGOs to be very accessible and proactive in their communication, demonstrating a strong and natural commitment to AAP.

156. FGD participants felt that project activities were generally relevant to their needs and timely. Although two projects that included shelter rehabilitation elements noted challenges delivering activities within the agreed project implementation period, this was due to restrictions on the movement of materials and personnel that were outside the NGOs’ control.

157. Beneficiary views on relevance and timeliness should be put into the context of high levels of unmet chronic needs. For example, people benefitting from a WASH household rehabilitation project in Gaza had been affected by the 2014 Gaza war and people benefitting from rehabilitation of houses in the H2 area of Hebron had, in some cases, submitted requests to the local authorities for assistance twenty years ago. Therefore, the oPt HF’s ability to deliver outcomes should be interpreted against the wider context of a deteriorating protracted crisis with an increasingly constrained funding environment. This is because a limited pot of funds with a clear mandate to address priority needs in a 6-12 month implementation period cannot realistically address many of the long-standing gaps.

5.1.2. Responding to acute conflict-related needs in 2018

158. In 2018, responding to acute needs resulting from GMR-related violence in the context of a deteriorating economic environment with an ongoing electricity and water crisis was a high priority for the oPt HF and was the focus of three RAs. The first RA identified, alongside a range of acute health needs, that “mental health and psychosocial consequences of the demonstration-related violence are expected to be high, exacerbating the frustrations and despondency that
Accordingly, the first two RAs prioritized MHPSS. Box 2 describes a project targeting people directly affected by injury and loss of family members in the GMR.

**Box 2: Providing psychosocial services to civilians injured and traumatized in the GMR**

An NNGO received $321,535 through the second RA to implement an MHPSS project targeting people injured and psychologically affected by the violent response to the GMR. The NNGO worked with health service providers and a network of CBOs to conduct outreach and identification of potential beneficiaries through social media, posters, word of mouth and community liaison. The project provided MHPSS and recreational activities and referred severely affected persons to complementary advanced psychological, medical and legal services. The evaluation team met with project staff and undertook two gender-disaggregated FGDs at the implementing partner’s office. The project had been completed recently.

The Israeli military response to the GMR resulted in a high number of fatalities and injuries in 2018. WHO recorded 210 gunshot related deaths and 6,872 injuries between March 2018 and March 2019; 172 people were permanently disabled as a result of their gunshot injuries, including 36 children. Those injured and the families of the injured and killed had suffered serious psychological effects in many cases. One young man enrolled in the oPt HF project described for example: “The sustained injuries traumatized us psychologically, though we were not able to understand or realize the symptoms. We suffered lack of sleep, isolation, losing temper easily, nervousness, feeling of loss.”

All the women consulted in the FGD were extremely positive about the effectiveness of the services. They had learned a range of techniques for relaxation and stress management. They also described meeting women from other groups in organized entertainment sessions where they gave each other gifts, played games, and shared stories. They had never experienced anything like it and found it extremely useful. One woman was having a picnic with her family when a gas bomb was fired at them directly. She was unable to walk for weeks afterwards due to fear. She attended ten workshop sessions, which helped her to deal with her anxiety. Another woman, a divorced single mother with seven children, said that the sessions had helped her to manage her stress and enabled her to deal with her children and the stresses of life on a daily basis.

The women said that they continue to use the techniques that they have learned regularly and also share them with their children. They expressed a desire for services to be continued and suggested a range of continuation activities, including having women’s camps with other groups to maintain their connections. Young men participating in the workshops also expressed a desire to maintain the support networks formed through the project.

The beneficiaries consulted agreed that the project arrived at the right time, when they were dealing with very high levels of stress, and they only wished that the sessions had gone on for longer.

All FGD participants highlighted that the NNGO and CBOs had been proactive in reaching out to identify those in need and encouraging them to enrol. The organizations were very accommodating, allowing them to switch between morning and afternoon sessions depending on what worked for them and paying for transport costs where necessary. They also mentioned that the organizations were very good at keeping them informed through text messages and calls.
Box 3: Making a difference to people’s lives – an individual story

During an FGD in Gaza, one young man injured in the GMR had been left disabled and described his experience of participating in psychosocial workshops. His father had been very angry with him for joining the GMR protests and, when he was injured, stopped talking to him and refused to let him leave the house. He became isolated and his relationship with his family deteriorated. He struggled to deal with his physical injuries, the psychological effects, and punishment by his family. His father was initially reluctant to allow him to join the workshop sessions. However, his parents were later invited to attend, which dramatically improved their relationship.

The young man explained that since taking part in the workshops his life has changed, he has been included in the family again, he has become more open and outgoing, and he is coping much better with his long-term disability.

5.1.3. Responding to an increasingly coercive environment in the West Bank in 2018

159. In 2018, the extremely constrained funding environment had left 75 per cent of HRP funding needs for the West Bank unmet. Combined with UNRWA’s funding shortfall, this had led to the closure of basic services. The second SA strategy paper identified the increasing incidence of settler violence and ‘price tag’ attacks in the West Bank, alongside continued demolitions, confiscations, and displacements in Area C, the H2 area of Hebron, and East Jerusalem. Therefore, it prioritized activities designed to prevent and mitigate the effects of demolitions, confiscation and settler violence and other factors contributing to the coercive environment.

160. The oPt HF funded a range of shelter and livelihood projects with a strong protection focus implemented by international and national NGOs in the West Bank, particularly in Area C and H2. Box 4 describes a project implemented by a consortium of NNGOs in the Bethlehem Governorate and Box 5 a project implemented by an INGO with a CBO partner in the H2 area of Hebron.
Box 4: oPt-funded projects to address the impacts of settler violence in Bethlehem Governorate[101]

A consortium of three Palestinian NGOs received US$ 567,463 under the second SA in 2018 to implement a project supporting vulnerable farmers in Area C exposed to settler violence over an eight-month implementation period. The evaluation team met the project team, local authority counterparts, and project beneficiaries at the NGO office and visited the farm of one beneficiary. The project was still under implementation at the time of the visit.

The project was implemented in El Khader, Bethlehem Governorate, and targeted vulnerable farmers who have suffered or are vulnerable to settler violence and destruction of productive assets and crops. One NGO had already undertaken similar projects working with the Ministry of Agriculture, which provide lists of registered families who have suffered demolitions and destruction of productive assets.

The project rehabilitated access roads and provided targeted support based on individual assessments of farmer requirements to provide partial compensation for losses and damage, for example by providing replacement vines and olive trees where these had been destroyed by settlers. It also upgraded or provided new assets such as water sources, shades, and repaired boundary fences and walls. The scope of works was agreed with each farmer with a value of between $500 and $2,000 and payments made to farmers on a reimbursement basis.

Project beneficiaries expressed a high level of satisfaction with the relevance and timeliness of assistance provided. Notably, the assistance was provided in good time for the planting season. A number of people noted that the assistance, while appreciated, fell far short of compensating them for the real value of their losses (for example, the cost of productive olive trees far exceeded the funding available). However, one of the principle added values of the assistance was enabling farmers to assert and maintain their claim to their land. One farmer noted, “I lost 450 grape plants. I worked hard over the years until they became productive but the settlers came and destroyed everything. The assistance was very motivating to us to go back and plant our lands. Even though the loss is much bigger than the assistance received, at least we feel that there are organizations helping us to protect our land.”

161. The project described below was implemented not only in partnership with a CBO but also in close cooperation with the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC), the Palestinian local entity responsible for maintaining buildings in H2. The HRC usually operated with bilateral donor funding but it appreciated the contribution of the oPt HF project. This is because the INGO implementing the project was able to take construction materials into the highly restricted H2 area. The HRC had partnered with the Red Cross and the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) because they were able to transport construction materials.[102] However, the government of Israel did not renew the TIPH’s mandate to operate in H2 after 31 January 2019. As a result, the HRC’s work had slowed down, despite the increase in settler violence. This occurred during the project’s implementation and the HRC appreciated having an alternative partner.

[101] Photo of ratings from men’s FGD
[102] The TIPH monitoring mechanism was established in 1994, following the massacre of 29 Palestinians worshiping at the Ibrahimi mosque by an Israeli settler. See OCHA (2019e) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of the Hebron city - Findings of needs assessment, April 2019
Box 5: oPt-funded projects to address the impacts of settler violence in the H2 area of Hebron[^103]

The second SA in 2018 prioritized shelter activities for households in the H2 area in Hebron that suffer frequent settler violence. Recommended activities included the provision of protective measures for properties against trespass, combustible materials, and stone throwing as well as the rehabilitation of dilapidated properties. This followed a multi-cluster household survey carried out in August 2018 that identified that 69 per cent of houses in restricted and prohibited areas required essential renovation works. They were unable to carry out the work due to the cost as well as restrictions on bringing materials and laborers into the area.

An INGO received US$ 300,000 from the second SA in 2018 to rehabilitate the shelters of vulnerable households in the H2 area of Hebron over a seven-month implementation period (the project was ongoing). The evaluation team met with project staff and undertook two gender-disaggregated FGDs at the HRC offices.

Palestinians in H2 are particularly vulnerable to settler violence and face daily difficulties due to living in a highly coercive environment. Around 33,000 Palestinians and several hundred Israeli settlers live in the highly restricted H2 area of Hebron city, over which the state of Israel was awarded control under the Oslo Accords. Movement of people and goods into parts of H2 are strictly controlled, particularly for the 6,920 Palestinians who live in a “closed military zone” and an area where only pedestrian access is permitted through Israeli security-controlled checkpoints. In addition to violence and intimidation from settlers, Israeli forces regularly raid and temporarily occupy Palestinian homes.

One of the beneficiaries of the oPt HF funded project described her experience living in H2 as follows:

“There are surveillance cameras right next to my house. Settlers pass up and down by my house. They use foul language against me, they scream and throw stones. When going to harvest, settlers would unleash their dogs. I can’t even lock my door. I am unable to live in my own house. They are always in my face. I have six children and I am a widow. My house has been severely degraded by the activities of the Israelis and settlers. I want to stay in my house. I had open-heart surgery and have a problem with an artery in my leg. I struggle, but I don’t want the settlers to see that I am weak. I have to defend my children and my house.”

The project included the supply and installation of “protection elements” including fences, gates, steel window nets, yard and alley covers. It also treated dampness and leaks, replaced doors and windows, and upgraded WASH facilities.

FGD participants were extremely positive about the relevance and timeliness of the project activities noting that works were completed very quickly and efficiently. Women participants scored the effectiveness of the project as five out of five in meeting their needs, noting that they felt much safer and happier. Their only requests were that more work be done, as the problems with their houses were often quite extensive. One man described his experience of the project as follows:

“This project means a lot to us. Without this support, we could not fix our houses nor protect them from settler and soldiers’ attacks. It is also very difficult to bring in any materials or equipment to the restricted area. Moreover, the majority of families living here live in poverty due to the closure of hundreds of shops and restriction on movement and, therefore, we would not have survived without this support. Through this project, they helped us to fix a few things in the house but mainly add safety measures and fence the houses to protect us from direct attacks.”

Several women very strongly emphasized the psychological benefits of the project, both in demonstrating solidarity and in improving their living environment and safety. For example, one woman noted, “Now we are stronger and more resilient and feel someone is standing by us. The project made us feel that someone cares about us.”

The NGO and its CBO partner were described as very responsive, regularly visiting, inspecting work, providing regular updates and responding promptly to complaints. According to one woman, “They came five or six times for inspections and communication, which was very important for us. Every time I see them, I feel better because something is about to happen.”

[^103]: Photo of 50-year old widow living with her 13-year old daughter from OCHA (2019e) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of the Hebron city - Findings of needs assessment, April 2019
5.1.4. Responding to chronic needs in Gaza

162. The first SA in 2018 identified a range of chronic needs in the Gaza strip including access to water and sanitation and ending displacement for families still displaced from the 2014 conflict. Box 6 below describes an oPt HF-funded project responding to these needs by rehabilitating WASH facilities in houses that had been partially damaged during the escalation in 2014. This enabled people to return to their houses even with the basic WASH rehabilitation that the project provided.

**Box 6: Improving household WASH facilities**

A national NGO received $581,138 through the first SA to improve household WASH facilities for 1,000 war-affected families in the Gaza Strip over a 12-month implementation period. The NNGO worked in partnership with two CBOs and targeted people in the Beit Hanoun area, which is close to the border fence. The two CBO partners received grants via the primary grant-holder. They in turn each worked with a CBO that did not receive funding. The role of the CBOs was to visit households in the project location to help identify beneficiaries and also ensure that they attended the orientation workshops. The NNGO’s aim was to strengthen the capacity of the CBOs through the partnership. In particular, the two CBOs that received funding were able to increase their experience with reporting and financial management. The evaluation team met with project staff and undertook two gender-disaggregated FGDs at the implementing partner’s office. The project had been completed recently.

As shown in the photos of the results of the participatory exercise in the FGD, both male and female beneficiaries rated the relevance and quality of assistance highly. However, the NNGO had provided a very specific list of items that it would procure in its proposal. This restricted its flexibility and meant that it was unable to adapt the WASH facilities to meet the needs of households with elderly or disabled members. Also, when the project had a budget surplus, the NNGO was not able to add items to its procurement list. Therefore, it used the additional funding to increase the project’s coverage from an initially proposed 815 to 1,000 households.

163. One of the challenges noted in FGDs and by the implementing organizations was the limited number of beneficiaries targeted relative to the needs of the community. Beneficiaries noted however that they respected the rigor and transparency of the selection process.


[105] Photo 1 - Men's FGD ratings of project timeliness, quality, relevance and beneficiary selection. Photo 2 - Women's FGD ratings of project timeliness, quality, relevance, beneficiary selection and communication.
5.2. Contributing to providing principled assistance

164. The provision of ‘timely, coordinated and principled assistance’ lies at the heart of the CBPF impact statement. While the evaluation can draw on tangible evidence to determine issues of timeliness and coordination, an examination of principled assistance is more complex, particularly in the oPt context, which is a highly politicized occupation situation. Adherence to the humanitarian principles is particularly sensitive but important given the level of scrutiny to which donors and humanitarian agencies are subjected (the description of the context in Annex 5 highlights the challenges that humanitarian agencies face). The oPt HF requires partners to sign up to the humanitarian principles during the due diligence and capacity assessment process. To the extent possible, the HFU then monitors partners to ensure that they are adhering to the principles during project implementation. Table 10 below summarizes the evaluation findings against each of the principles.

Table 10: The provision of principled humanitarian assistance by the oPt HF[106]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Finding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanity</strong></td>
<td>Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings. As highlighted by figure 6, the oPt HF has supported HRP SO1, which seeks to protect the rights of Palestinians and promote adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law. It has done this by funding a range of protection activities, including legal assistance for Bedouin and herding communities in the West Bank and accompaniment programs for children at risk on their commute to school. Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 described how the oPt HF projects take account of gender, age and disability and ensure AAP, all of which are required to ensure respect for human beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impartiality</strong></td>
<td>Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. Section 3.1.3 and 3.4.2 of this report outlined how oPt HF allocation processes identify those most in need, including marginalized groups. The HFU is also rigorous in its monitoring of beneficiary selection processes to ensure that assistance has been provided to the most vulnerable. More broadly, the main challenge to providing a needs-based humanitarian response is the sharp decline in humanitarian funding. Contributions to the HRP decreased by around one-third between 2015 and 2018 (see Table 4), even though needs have continued to grow (see Annex 5 for further details). The increase in contributions to the oPt HF in 2018 made it a more important funding instrument and placed it in a better position to respond impartially. However, it still remains small.</td>
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Independence

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

In oPt, the greatest challenge to independent humanitarian action is the range of barriers imposed by Israeli authorities on the movement of humanitarian aid workers, particularly national staff members; restrictions on the delivery of materials or the confiscation of equipment required for project implementation; and limitations on building, expanding or rehabilitating infrastructure in Area C and the Gaza Strip (see Annex 5).[107] oPt HF partners provided examples of these challenges, including the confiscation of bulldozers in Area C and restrictions on the movement of staff and materials into H2.

In addition, as described in Annex 5, attempts to delegitimize humanitarian actors through targeted campaigns alleging political action against Israel or violations of counter-terrorism legislation and international have made it more difficult for NGOs, in particular, to operate independently.[108]

Neutrality

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Maintaining neutrality in a context where there are regular violations of international law and duty-bearers fail to implement their responsibilities is extremely challenging. In the Gaza Strip, humanitarian actors also have to navigate the counter-terrorism legislation and no contact policy adopted by many donors (see Annex 5).

For the oPt HF, one of the highest risks is that of funding going to a partner with a political agenda.[109] The HFU uses the due diligence process to ensure that potential partners do not have political affiliations. However, in the event of funding going to a partner with a political agenda, the risk mitigation measures comprise reminding the partner of its commitment to the humanitarian principles, establishing whether the partner has breached the principles, discussing with the HC if freezing the project’s activities is an appropriate response and terminating the project if necessary. Politicization of the fund’s visibility at project or partner level is an equally high risk. In this case, the risk reduction measures comprise sharing the oPt HF’s visibility guidelines at the start of each project, the fund manager reviewing all fund-related publications and visibility materials, and periodic HFU visits to project sites.

165. Table 10 has highlighted that there are three major barriers to ensuring adherence to humanitarian principles – a sharp decline in humanitarian funding that makes it difficult to address needs impartially, a range of administrative barriers imposed by the Israeli authorities that impinge on the independence of humanitarian action, and the regular violations of international law that make it challenging to maintain the neutrality of humanitarian action. Addressing these challenges is well beyond the remit of the oPt HF but donors to the fund, working with the HC, could ensure adequate levels of funding and also do more to address the political and administrative issues identified.

[107] https://www.ochaopt.org/theme/humanitarian-space
[108] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-operations-undermined-delegitimization-access-restrictions-and-administrative
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section begins by presenting overall conclusions from this case study. It then outlines a short set of recommendations.

6.1. Conclusions

166. The evidence presented in the previous sections demonstrates that the oPt HF is a well-managed fund. Stakeholders were unanimous in praising the HFU for its approachability, open communication and willingness to provide support to partners. The ability of the small team of national staff and UNVs to manage the tripling in donor contributions in 2018 without significant additional capacity was impressive. Although the team had to manage a larger fund, it did so without compromising the robustness of its risk management system. It is appropriate that the HFU has sought to increase its monitoring and reporting capacity since the end of last year in order to maintain close oversight of grants.

167. The current HC was a proactive leader, setting strategic directions for the fund and engaging actively with clusters and fund recipients to address complaints and issues. He had used the fund both to focus resources on key priorities in the HRP and to respond swiftly to the humanitarian needs resulting from the GMR in 2018.

168. The oPt HF had improved the timeliness of its assistance over the evaluation period, with partners expressing their satisfaction with the timeliness of allocations and disbursements, and there was consensus that it had contributed to strengthening coordination. The AB also fostered collaboration between different actors and gave NNGOs a voice in fund-related discussions. The oPt HF is closely aligned with the HRP, although it no longer requires projects to be in the HRP in order to be eligible for funding, and this provided an incentive for participation in HRP processes.

169. Consultations with beneficiaries showed deep appreciation, not only for the material assistance provided through oPt HF projects but also for the sense of solidarity with affected communities that this represented. Projects in the West Bank, in particular, had strong protection benefits even though this was not their direct focus. FGD participants had found project activities relevant and their implementation timely. In addition, the evaluation identified numerous ways in which the projects had made a difference to people’s lives.

170. Unlike in many other humanitarian contexts, FGD participants were satisfied with levels of communication with partners and accountability mechanisms. This is perhaps due to the fact that the NGO partners worked with CBOs on community engagement and accountability measures. Working with CBOs to deliver services was a very positive feature of oPt HF projects since it made them more responsive to communities. However, the CBOs were not always paid for their efforts and their work was not always visible so the project review processes could pay more attention to ensuring greater fairness and visibility for these organizations. It was also helpful that the HFU verified whether complaints and feedback mechanisms were operational during its monitoring visits. The oPt HF and wider humanitarian community had made efforts to mainstream gender and protection, including providing training and appointing cluster gender focal points (with plans to appoint protection focal points across the clusters as well). It is commendable that the oPt HF had involved the protection cluster gender focal point in reviewing projects and also included a disability focal point as an observer during the project review process. However, the challenge is that these were individuals taking on project review responsibilities as volunteers in addition to their full-time jobs, which is unsustainable in the long-term. While the oPt HF, along with the broader humanitarian community, had supported protection activities directly as well as efforts to mainstream it, it is important to bear in mind that these only go a small way to addressing the consequences of the widespread rights violations. They are unable to deal with the causes of the protection risks because, ultimately, this requires a political solution that is beyond the remit of humanitarian actors.

171. It is positive that the oPt HF committed to funding NNGOs directly as early as 2011, given the long history that many NNGOs have of operating in the country. It is also encouraging that the number of NNGO projects funded as well as the volume of funding going directly to NNGOs increased significantly in 2017 and 2018. In addition, NNGOs are actively involved in the AB and in project review committees. However, in the current climate of strong donor interest in using CBPFs as a means to meet their Grand Bargain commitments to increase funding to local and national NGOs, it is important that the oPt HF is able to maintain its stated commitment to funding the best-placed partners on the basis of their comparative advantage. Given the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and access and movement restrictions, in
some cases, international organizations are better placed to procure and/or deliver assistance. In some cases, international partners also have unique technical capabilities and scale. Clarity about allocation criteria, project scoring, and the HC’s engagement in clarifying the rationale for particular funding decisions had been particularly helpful in managing pressure on clusters and the HFU when selecting partners.

172. The oPt HF’s allocation processes had evolved over the evaluation period as stakeholders sought to develop the most appropriate approach to selecting high quality projects. While stakeholders were generally satisfied with the current process, one common complaint from all types of partners (UN and NGO) was that there was insufficient feedback on projects that had been rejected. This could be addressed relatively easily since the project review committees do make note of the reasons for refusing funding.

173. Although donor contributions to the oPt HF increased dramatically in 2018, this was due to the convergence of a number of factors and the fund has no guarantee of being able to maintain this funding level, despite being an efficient and effective mechanism. In fact, in June 2019, it was facing a funding crisis and the prospect of being unable to make a second SA in the latter part of the year. Although the situation changed quickly with additional donor contributions, this highlights the need for systematic resource mobilization efforts to provide greater predictability.

174. Overall, stakeholders were very positive about the oPt HF, highlighting its effectiveness and emphasizing the role that it had played in the humanitarian response, despite its modest size. They generally praised its timeliness, including its ability to respond to unforeseen needs through RAs. Amongst partners, the one concern was about the volume of funding available through the oPt HF, in a context of declining funding and growing humanitarian needs, with a number of partners arguing for a larger fund.

6.2. Recommendations for the oPt HF

175. Based on the findings of the evaluation and the conclusions in the section above, the table below lists a small number of recommendations to help strengthen the functioning of the oPt HF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Responsible/Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>OCHA should strengthen the resource mobilization strategy for the oPt HF to include a better understanding of donor decision-making processes and funding cycles so that it can engage with donors at the most opportune times. Also, the fund manager should be empowered to engage directly with donors to discuss operational issues (such as the scheduling of payments) and to respond to technical queries.</td>
<td>OCHA HoO, HFU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation: The significant increase in contributions to the oPt HF in 2018 was due to external factors rather than a concerted resource mobilization effort. The fund plays a demonstrably important role in the humanitarian response in oPt and OCHA could help to ensure more consistent funding levels if it engaged with donors when there is an opportunity to influence decisions (for example, when DFID is developing its next multi-year business case).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The HFU should work with cluster coordinators to provide consistent feedback to partners on projects that have not been selected for funding.</td>
<td>HFU, Cluster coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation: NGO partners whose projects had not been funded expressed a strong desire for more detailed feedback on the reasons for the rejection so that they can learn and improve future applications. This would also increase the transparency of the funding allocation process and inspire more confidence that it is fair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Donors on the AB, together with the HC, should consider whether it is possible to secure general funding (outside the oPt HF) for cluster focal points for cross-cutting issues (gender, protection and disability) who could then review oPt HF proposals and support partners to improve how they mainstream these issues.</td>
<td>AB, HC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explanation: The current system of volunteer focal points that take on the responsibility of reviewing projects and/or providing training and support in addition to their normal jobs is unsustainable in the long-term. These positions should be financed outside the oPt HF since they serve a system-wide function although the fund would also benefit.

Recommendation: Donors on the AB should make a concerted effort to work together, and with the HC, to address the barriers to the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance outlined in the report. This would benefit the oPt HF and its partners. Donors should also increase their funding to make it feasible to address humanitarian needs adequately (principles of humanity and impartiality).

Explanation: The crisis in oPt is ultimately a political crisis and it requires more collective action by the international community to address the issues that make it difficult for the oPt HF and its partners to deliver principled assistance.

6.3. Issues for consideration and further analysis in the Synthesis Report

176. This case study identified the following issues that have broader implications for CBPFs and will be addressed in detail in the Global Synthesis Report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Funding for multi-sector programming:</strong> The challenges with financing multi-sector programs through a sectoral cluster system are common across CBPFs so the synthesis report will review findings from across the case studies and other CBPFs to identify good practice and potential ways forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Evidence on outcomes, operational impact and how CBPFs contribute to making a difference to people's lives:</strong> Despite donor appetite to better understand the operational impact of CBPFs and how they make a difference to people's lives, there is a lack of systematically collected data and evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Strategy development and allocation processes:</strong> Case study CBPFs have very different strategy development and allocation processes despite the moves towards standardization. While it is important to have processes adapted to specific contexts, the synthesis report will have the opportunity to identify good practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 1: Evaluation purpose and scope

This annex outlines the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, and summarizes data collection tools. It should be read in conjunction with the inception report, which provides a more detailed explanation of the evaluation team’s approach.

177. OCHA has commissioned this evaluation of the 18 CBPFs that it managed between 2015 and 2018[110] in partnership with six CBPF donors.[111] It is committed to evaluating the CBPFs every three years and this is the first evaluation since they were standardized globally in a 2015 Policy Instruction and Operational Handbook.[112] Interviews during the inception phase highlighted that the evaluation provides an opportunity to take stock of standardization processes and consider how the CBPFs should now move forward, particularly in a fast changing humanitarian landscape.

Evaluation purpose and intended users

178. The evaluation has two main purposes – to improve accountability and learning. It examines the results of the humanitarian action supported by CBPFs with the purpose of drawing lessons on what has worked well. It also identifies challenges to the effective functioning in order to provide recommendations on how to continue to strengthen CBPFs as a funding mechanism in support of timely, coordinated and principled humanitarian response for affected people. It is anticipated that the evaluation will contribute to greater transparency and accountability for all stakeholders involved.[113]

179. At a global level, the intended users are the Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA, UNDP and MPTFO, the Pooled Fund Working Group, the CBPF-NGO dialogue platform, UN and NGO partner organizations, and the OCHA Donor Support Group. At country-level, the stakeholders have been identified as Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams, Advisory Boards, OCHA offices including the Humanitarian Financing Unit, UNDP offices where they act as Managing Agent, affected population representatives, NGOs, including local NGOs, UN agencies and donors.

Thematic scope

180. The evaluation assesses how CBPFs have performed against their strategic objectives and principles, as per the 2015 OCHA CBPF Policy Instruction. As required by the ToR, the evaluation also examines how CBPFs have performed against their three expected outcomes which include response, leadership, coordination and resource mobilization, and the five principles of inclusiveness, flexibility, timeliness, efficiency, and accountability and risk management in order to deliver the overall operational impact of CBPFs, which is the provision of timely, coordinated, principled assistance to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity.

Evaluation approach and tools

181. The inception report for this evaluation describes the approach and tools in detail and should be read in conjunction with this case study report. A summary is provided below.

Analytical framework

182. Given the primary focus of this evaluation on practical solutions rather than theory, it uses an analytical framework (see Figure below) that articulates the critical building blocks and enablers of success for CBPFs to deliver their intended impact.

[110] During the evaluation period, CBPFs were operational in the following countries: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Myanmar, Pakistan, occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. The Colombia fund closed at the end of 2018. The Haiti fund closed in 2015 and is not part of this evaluation. CBPFs are managed by OCHA. Some funds are administered by UNDP’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office as “Administrative Agent” and for some funds, UNDP country offices act as “Managing Agent”, i.e., they transfer money to NGOs.

[111] The evaluation is jointly funded by Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US.


183. The framework presents a number of different factors for CBPFs that will combine at country-level to contribute to the delivery of timely, coordinated and principled humanitarian response for affected people.

Evaluation matrix

184. The evaluation examines the performance of CBPFs under four evaluation questions. Cutting across these are gender, AAP, humanitarian reforms and five CBPF principles.

- EQ1: Impact - To what extent do CBPFs make a difference in the lives of affected people by addressing the differentiated needs of vulnerable groups?
- EQ2: Outcomes - In what ways do CBPFs contribute to strengthening the outcomes of humanitarian response, leadership and coordination and to what extent are CBPFs likely to remain relevant for future humanitarian contexts?
- EQ3: Activities and outputs - To what extent are CBPFs supporting partners to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs in a way that is timely and is consistent with Grand Bargain priorities?
- EQ4: Inputs - Is the management of CBPFs fit for purpose and do they operate efficiently?

185. Annex 2 presents the evaluation matrix, which provides the structure for this report. It includes the four evaluation questions and 13 sub-questions, indicators, and methods for data collection and analysis.
Data collection methods and sources

186. The team uses a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. While much of the data collected was qualitative, it also gathered quantitative data in the form of (i) financial and funding data, (ii) project-related data on age and gender, and (iii) metrics related to fund disbursement.

187. The main methods for data collection and analysis for the case study include the following:
- Document and literature review (see annex 3 for a bibliography);
- Financial and project-related data analysis;
- Semi-structured key informant interviews (see annex 2 for a list of interview participants);
- Gender-disaggregated community engagement.

188. The box below details the approach to the country visit.

**Box: Country visit process**

Preparation for the country included carrying out a light preliminary desk review, which focused on gathering evidence against the evaluation matrix to be explored in greater depth in-country. The team agreed an itinerary which included meetings with key stakeholders, field visits and community engagement prior to their arrival in country.

The visit commenced with a brief kick-off meeting in country with evaluation stakeholders to orientate the team to the national context, provide background on the evaluation approach, methods and tools, and to enable an initial exploration of key issues.

The team undertook a series of semi-structured interviews with key in-country informants both at national and field level, together with visits to project sites and focus group discussions with affected populations.

Towards the end of the visit, the team made a feedback presentation to the Advisory Board (AB) and the Humanitarian Funding Unit (HFU), to present and discuss preliminary findings, to fill gaps in evidence, to check the validity of the findings, and to foster ownership.

Following the visit, the team produced a short interim update. It then undertook a detailed data analysis that informed the preparation of this country report. The five case study reports will feed into a broader analysis for the evaluation synthesis report.

Gender and equity

189. The team applied a gender sensitive approach and sought to examine the extent to which the CBPF addresses issues of equity. Evaluation questions specifically refer to gender, inclusion and vulnerability and through the review of literature, key informant interviews, and the team’s direct engagement with communities, the evaluation has sought to analyse and assess the extent to which the differential needs, priorities and voices of affected people have been considered in the design, selection, implementation and monitoring of CBPF-funded projects. The team has been able to draw on the CBPFs’ use of the IASC Gender Marker (and, as of 2019, the Gender with Age Marker).

Approach to confidentiality

190. The team’s stakeholder analysis highlighted the potential for some issues to be sensitive. In order to mitigate participants’ concerns and to maximize the opportunities to elicit relevant information, the team undertook interviews based on an agreement that it would not attribute details to a specific person or agency. It also adopted this approach for community FGDs. The team filed notes from the interviews and discussions digitally in secure online storage.

Limitations

191. The inception report identified a number of limitations linked to the quantity and quality of the evidence. For the
team, inconsistencies between data reported in the annual reports and the information contained in GMS posed a particular challenge during data analysis and synthesis. In case of any conflicts between data from annual reports and the GMS, this report has used data from annual reports.

192. This report is the product of a two-week field visit that included visits to four project sites. There are limitations to what can be achieved in a relatively short period of time, particularly in terms of collecting feedback from communities and project beneficiaries.
# Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

Presented below is the evaluation framework, consisting of evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators, data sources and analytical methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions/Sub-questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPACT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| EQ1: To what extent do CBPFs make a difference in the lives of affected people by addressing the differentiated needs of vulnerable groups? | • Evidence that CBPF-funded projects have contributed to saving lives  
• Evidence that CBPF-funded projects have contributed to alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity or other factors.  
• Evidence that the selection and implementation of CBPF-funded projects adhere to the humanitarian principles  
• Evidence of the timeliness of proposal review and disbursement  
• Evidence of the timeliness of project implementation (in relation to the starting point of the crisis) |
| 1.1 To what extent do CBPFs contribute to the provision of timely and principled assistance to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity? |                                                                             |
| **OUTCOMES**                      |                                                                             |
| EQ2: In what ways do CBPFs contribute to strengthening the outcomes of humanitarian response, leadership and coordination and to what extent are CBPFs likely to remain relevant for future humanitarian contexts? |                                                                             |
| 2.1 Improved response: To what extent are CBPFs able to meet newly emerging needs in a timely and flexible manner and to identify and adapt to future changes? | • Evidence of mechanisms for identifying newly emerging needs in ongoing crises and in new contexts  
• Evidence of the timeliness of proposal review and disbursement in response to new emergencies  
• Evidence of the flexibility of CBPFs to adapt to changes in context  
• Evidence of CBPF ability to adopt new technology and innovate  
• Evidence of CBPF management capacity to scan the horizon and of flexibility to adapt to changes  
• Evidence of the extent to which CBPFs have enabled donors to improve the flexibility and reach of unearmarked humanitarian funding |
| 2.2 Better coordination: How do CBPFs contribute to a coordinated humanitarian response? | • Evidence of the contribution made by CBPFs to increasing collaboration between humanitarian actors (local, national, international) and coordination within the humanitarian system (clusters)  
• Evidence that HCs and CBPF Advisory Boards ensure that CBPF-funded projects are coordinated with the broader humanitarian response when making funding decisions and are implemented in line with the HPC  
• Evidence that donors take account of CBPF funding when making funding decisions |
| 2.3 Strengthened leadership: To what extent do CBPFs strengthen the leadership of the HC? | • Evidence of ways in which CBPFs strengthen the leadership and coordination function of HCs  
• Evidence of strategic decision-making processes  
• Evidence that the HC adheres to the Operational Handbook for the CBPFs. |
| 2.4 To what extent do OCHA and HCs use CBPFs strategically? | • Evidence that HCs take account of other mechanisms and sources of funding (including bilateral funding) during CBPF allocations  
• Evidence that HC decisions are based on the comparative advantage of CBPFs and other funding mechanisms  
• Evidence that CBPFs are meeting urgent, prioritized needs  
• Evidence that OCHA has an organization-wide approach to humanitarian financing? |
| **ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS**         |                                                                             |
| EQ3: To what extent are CBPFs supporting partners to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs in a way that is timely and is consistent with HRP priorities and cross-cutting issues? |                                                                             |
| 3.1 To what extent do CBPFs respond to the most urgent needs of people and communities affected by crisis? | • Evidence that CBPF projects are informed by coordinated and participatory needs assessments  
• Evidence that CBPF prioritization processes identify the greatest humanitarian needs including those of marginalized groups  
• Evidence that CBPF selection and implementation processes take account of gender, age and disability issues, as well as broader inclusiveness issues  
• Evidence that CBPF partners involve affected populations in the project management cycle.  
• Evidence that accessible mechanisms are in place for information sharing and for feedback and complaints |
| 3.2 To what extent are CBPFs aligned with Humanitarian Response Plans, prioritized against needs and relevant to the context? | • Evidence that CBPF funding is aligned with HRPs and/or similar strategic plans  
• Evidence on whether CBPFs allocate funding for more than 12 months against multi-year HRPs  
• Evidence that clusters are effective in their prioritization and selection of CBPF projects  
• Evidence that projects take account of relevant quality standards in their design  
• Evidence that CBPFs promote the use of cash and vouchers where relevant |
| 3.3 To what extent do CBPFs employ effective disbursement mechanisms and minimize transaction costs? | • Evidence that CBPF disbursement mechanisms are timely and aligned with project implementation  
• Evidence that CBPF disbursement procedures and reporting requirements are designed to minimize transaction costs  
• Evidence that CBPF decision-making processes are transparent |
| 3.4 To what extent and in what ways do CBPFs promote the use of the best-placed partners and strengthen localization? | • Evidence of outreach at country level to national and local actors  
• Evidence of inclusion of local and national actors in CBPF decision-making processes  
• Evidence that CBPFs have procedures in place to select the most appropriate partners  
• Evidence that CBPF partners are responding to identified humanitarian needs  
• Evidence of targeted training and support to NNGOs throughout the programme cycle  
• Evidence that CBPF documentation and guidance are available in national languages |

INPUTS

EQ4: Is the management of CBPFs fit for purpose and do they operate efficiently?

| 4.1 To what extent do CBPFs support overall resource mobilization for HRPs? | • Evidence of HC/HCT efforts to raise funds for CBPFs  
• Level of CBPF funding to HRP projects  
• Evidence on whether CBPFs are able to mobilize multi-year contributions from donors against multi-year HRPs |
| 4.2 Are CBPFs managing risks appropriately, and is there sufficient oversight and accountability, including monitoring and reporting systems? | • Evidence that CBPFs have risk management systems in place  
• Evidence that CBPF accountability and oversight mechanisms operate effectively  
• Evidence that CBPF managers are adequately resourced to ensure oversight and accountability, including monitoring and fraud case management  
• Evidence that CBPF reporting systems strike a balance between accountability and minimising transaction costs |
| 4.3 Has the global standardization of CBPFs (as per the Policy Instruction, Operational Handbook and Common Performance Framework) increased efficiency? | • Evidence of added value of harmonization resulting from the global standardization of CBPFs  
• Evidence of the added value of the GMS  
• Evidence of the functionality and transparency of Umoja  
• Evidence that global standardization has reduced management costs of CBPFs  
• Evidence that global standardization has reduced transaction costs for fund recipients over the evaluation timeframe  
• Evidence that harmonization of CBPFs is balanced with flexibility to adapt to local contexts  
• Efficiency implications of different fund management structures |
| 4.4 Is there sufficient capacity in the humanitarian system to manage CBPF processes and deliver CBPF projects? | • Evidence that capacity at a global level is adequate to lead, manage and retain oversight of the CBPFs  
• Evidence that the capacity of the HC, the Advisory Board, OCHA (the HFU) at a country-level is adequate to fulfil their governance, management and technical advisory roles  
• Evidence that the clusters are able to meet their strategic and technical review responsibilities  
• Evidence that the quantity and quality of humanitarian partners is sufficient to deliver high quality CBPF projects |
Annex 3: Interview participants

Below is a list of persons consulted during the oPt case study visit.

Abdel Naser Soboh, Gaza Health Cluster Coordinator
Abdelrahman Abu Hassanien, Humanity and Inclusion
Abed Yasin, Project Manager, Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine (ESDC)
Ahmed Al Helou, Executive Manager, Right to Live Society
Ahmed Madi, Future Association for Culture and Development (FACD)
Ala’ Abu-Ayyash, Hebron Team Supervisor, YMCA
Alicia Moore, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA
Amal Ayyad, Chief Accountant, Near East Council of Churches (NECC) Committee
Amjad Hamdan, Audit Manager, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co.
Amjad Shawwa, Director, PNGO
Anas Musallam, Food Security Sector Coordinator, Gaza
Andrea de Domenico, Deputy Head of Office, OCHA oPt
Athar Hodali, Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees
Ayadil Saparbekov, Health Emergencies Programme Team Lead, WHO
Baha El Shatali, Education Cluster Coordinator, Gaza
Carol Awad, WASH cluster coordinator, West Bank, UNICEF
Connie Bearderson, National Protection Cluster Coordinator, OHCHR
Deya Al Baba, Senior Project Officer for e-voucher programme in Gaza, CRS
Diab Masha’aleh, Chair, Jaba’a Local Council
Diana Anani, Head of Southern West Bank Sub-Office, OCHA
Dr Sara Halimah, National Health Cluster Coordinator, WHO
Emad Hamdan, Manager, Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC)
Engineer Hiluli Maraqa, Engineering Consultant, Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC)
Engineer Shadi Fawzi Al Janazreh, Project Manager, Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC)
Eric De Muynck, Consul, Head of Development Cooperation, Consulate General of the Kingdom of Belgium
Faadi Shamamasti, Shelter Cluster Coordinator, NRC
Fatma Shaaf, Project Coordinator, Wefaq Society for Women and Child Care
Filippo Ortolani, Technical Assistant - Gaza, ECHO
Fouz Ali Hasan, Finance and Monitoring Officer, oPt HF
Genevieve Boutin, Special Representative, UNICEF State of Palestine
Hala Qishawi Jaber, Executive Director, Al Dameer Association for Human Rights
Hamada Al-Bayari, Humanitarian Affairs Analyst, OCHA Gaza
Haya Arqoub, Field Officer, Rural Centre for Sustainable Development (RCSD)
Heba Numan Harara, Site Engineer, Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)
Hosni Barakat, Food Security Sector Coordinator
Isra Muzaffar, Head of Central West Bank Sub-Office, OCHA
Iyad Abu Hamam, Shelter Cluster Coordinator, Gaza
Iyad Shwaikheh, Head of Northern West Bank Sub-Office, OCHA
Jamal Milhem, Executive Director, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co.
Jamie McGoldrick, Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)
Julie Crawford, Human Rights Officer, Protection Cluster, OHCHR
Khalid Elmassri, Project Coordinator, Al Dameer Association for Human Rights
Kholoud M. Jirefil, Project Coordinator, AISHA
Kristin Luther, German Representative Office
Laurianne Leca, Head of Programmes - West Bank, UNRWA
Lena Alsadah, Project Coordinator, Land and Resource Research Center (LRC)
Loai Halayqa, Wadi Foken Council
Lubna Sabbath, Health Coordinator, Near East Council of Churches (NECC) Committee
Mageda Alawneh, WASH cluster co-coordinator, Palestinian Water Authority
Maher Daoudi, Senior Programme Manager, Humanitarian Assistance, Consulate General of Sweden
Mahmoud Shalabi, Manager of Emergency and Medical Training Programmes, Medical Aid for Palestinians
Mahmoud Zitawi, Assistant Audit Manager, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co.
Malek Alasa, Ministry of Agriculture Engineer
Matthew Dalling, Chief Child Protection AoR Coordinator,
Annex 4: Bibliography

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OCHA (2015a) occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Pooled Fund Operational Manual, October 2015
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OCHA (2017c) 2016 occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report
OCHA (2017e) oPt Humanitarian Fund Allocation Strategy – 1st SA 2017
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OCHA (2018b) oPt Humanitarian Fund Operational Manual, July 2018
OCHA (2018e) oPt Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board Meeting, 22 March 2018
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OCHA (2019a) oPt Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – 15th April 2019
OCHA oPt (2019b) Risk Management Framework 2019: oPt Humanitarian Fund
OCHA (2019c) Humanitarian Response Plan 2019: oPt
OCHA (2019d) Gaza health sector still struggling to cope with ‘Great March of Return’ injuries.
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oPt HF (2019a) occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2018
Annex 5: The humanitarian context in oPt

193. The oPt has been occupied by the State of Israel since 1967 and people living under occupation are considered “protected persons” under international humanitarian law. The humanitarian crisis in the oPt is a direct consequence of the occupation and is typically characterized as a protection crisis with humanitarian consequences. Accordingly, the international humanitarian response is strongly focussed on humanitarian protection as well as providing material assistance to meet basic needs. In addition, 1.4 million Palestinians across the oPt were registered refugees in 2018 and are supported by the dedicated UN agency UNRWA.

194. The oPt and 4.95 million Palestinians within it are administratively and geographically fragmented across areas of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Each area is subject to a different set of protection, access, and socio-economic problems, which require tailored response strategies. The most vulnerable Palestinians are located in the Gaza strip, Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, Areas A and B of the West Bank also contain pockets of vulnerable people and refugees.

Conflict and economic restrictions

195. The West Bank and East Jerusalem are subject to extensive movement restrictions as well as periodic violence, arrests and detention, land seizures, and destruction of assets and livelihoods. There is also forced displacement, with the Israeli authorities citing security concerns, against a backdrop of the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. In addition, zoning and building permissions controlled by the State of Israel exert extensive restrictions on development.

196. The Gaza Strip periodically experiences intense episodes of violent conflict. Notably, prior to the evaluation review period the Gaza Strip experienced seven weeks of intense conflict between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli military in July and August 2014. This war in Gaza resulted in an estimated 1,549 Palestinians (a third of them children) killed; 11,000 injured; 20,000 homes destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, displacing around 100,000 people. A major deterioration in security in Gaza also occurred in 2018 with demonstrators in Gaza taking part in protests dubbed “the Great March of Return” (GMR), which have been met with violent responses from the State of Israel. Between March and October 2018, “228 Palestinians, including 43 children, have been killed by Israeli forces in the demonstrations and other circumstances. Over 24,000 Palestinians have been injured, including over 5,800 wounded by live ammunition.”

197. The State of Israel has subjected the Gaza Strip to economic blockade by land, sea and air, since Hamas took control of the Gaza strip in 2007, with movement of people and goods tightly restricted. Egypt closed the passenger border crossing at Rafah in October 2014, further restricting the movement of people and goods, until partially reopen-

[114] The 2016 HRP describes the humanitarian response in oPt with respect to these protected persons thusly: “These people living under occupation – ‘protected persons’ according to international humanitarian law – need and deserve a robust protection response from the humanitarian community. This remains our main priority.” OCHA (2016a) Humanitarian Response Plan 2016: oPt

[115] The 2015 Strategic Response Plan describes for example: “insufficient respect for the rights of Palestinian civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (HRIL) by all sides. These concerns are the main drivers of humanitarian vulnerabilities in the oPt.” OCHA (2015b) Strategic Response Plan 2015: oPt, p4.

[116] The 2018 HRP explains: “Where the occupying power and other duty bearers fail to provide for the basic needs of the population in the occupied territory, and such failures create vulnerabilities that surpass minimum standards, threatening life and dignity, it is incumbent on humanitarian actors to provide assistance to meet basic needs.” OCHA (2017d) Humanitarian Response Plan 2018: oPt, p9
ing in 2018 and full reopening it in 2019. The internal Palestinian political divide between the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, and the de-facto authorities in Gaza has further exacerbated economic conditions within Gaza, with the PA suspending payments for tens of thousands of civil servants since 2014, and suspending payments for fuel required for electricity generation, which contributed to an acute energy crisis in 2018, notably affecting provision of clean water and interrupting medical services.

198. Economic conditions in the Gaza strip have consequently progressively deteriorated. Reconstruction following the 2014 conflict has been extremely slow, and rates of poverty, food insecurity and unemployment have increased substantially. In 2018, 52 per cent of the labour force in Gaza was unemployed, with unemployment among youth reaching 67 per cent. Unemployment in the West Bank has remained stable at around 18-19 per cent.\[117\]

**Political constraints and the aid response**

199. There is currently no indication of progress towards a political solution to the conflict through a peace process to end the Israeli occupation and achieve the two-state solution. There is also little indication of a resolution to the internal Palestinian political divide. The political stalemate, economic blockade, movement and administrative restrictions severely limit the prospects for sustainable economic development, particularly in Gaza. Moreover, the Palestinian economy is heavily dependent on aid, including budget support to the Palestinian Authority and social transfers through UNRWA, all of which have been in decline since 2017.

**Figure: Number of people in need and targeted within Humanitarian Response Plans 2015-2019**

![Figure: Number of people in need and targeted within Humanitarian Response Plans 2015-2019]

200. The humanitarian response in oPt therefore heavily constrained by the political situation. It is also however constrained by the funding situation and response strategies have varied during the review period accordingly. In 2018, the humanitarian community adopted a multi-year HRP in the hope that greater coordination with development actors and duty-bearers would provide longer-term solutions and exit strategies for humanitarian programming. In 2019, however, based on a poor funding response to the 2018 HRP and dramatic cuts in aid funding from the US (historically the leading donor to the crisis) the 2018 HRP adopted an alternative strategy. Although needs had increased, the 2019 HRP underwent a prioritization to identify “the maximum number of vulnerable people we believe we can realistically reach in the current non-conducive political and resource climate.” Despite the total number of people in need cited as 2.5 million in both the 2018 and 2019 HRPs, and an “enormous rise in casualties” resulting from the GMR, the number targeted fell from 1.9 million to 1.4 million in the 2019 HRP and funding requirements also fell.

\[117\] World Bank (2019) *Palestine’s Economic Update – April 2019*
Humanitarian access

201. The Israeli authorities regularly interrupt and restrict humanitarian access to the oPt, notably access for personnel – particularly Palestinian staff - and materials, mostly citing security concerns. The movement of materials into Gaza and Area C of the West Bank is highly restricted, which seriously limits reconstruction and infrastructure development. The movement of Palestinians to access basic services, including healthcare, is often restricted. Counter-terrorism legislation, particularly "no contact" policies enforced by many donor countries, prohibits any interaction with the de-facto authorities in Gaza. The de-facto authorities in Gaza have also impeded the work of international NGOs.

202. More recently efforts to "delegitimize" humanitarian and human rights organizations have been led by civil society networks and organizations often lobbying in donor countries to allege violations of counter-terrorism legislation and international law, or political action against Israel. This has a range of effects including donor de-funding and increased scrutiny of prospective partners; closure of bank accounts by Israeli banks; and reputational damage to targeted organizations. Humanitarian organizations and workers also face various impediments created by the PA and Hamas.

203. In January 2019 the government of Israel did not renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), which had provided monitoring of human rights violations and protective presence since 1994. Immediately following the withdrawal of TIPH, the protection cluster reported increased intimidation, harassment and restriction of humanitarian actors by Israeli settlers.