SSH ELIGIBILITY PROCESS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General questions

Why the eligibility process?

In line with the Global Guidelines for Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPF), the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) Operational Manual and eligibility guidance documents that govern its management, national NGOs, international NGOs and UN Agencies are eligible to SSHF grants. However, the SSHF will only fund active NGOs that meet the four minimum requirements; fulfilled statement of interest requirements; completed due diligence on the online Grant Management System (GMS); have undergone the capacity assessment process and become eligible partners. Active participation in the humanitarian coordination system at sub-national level, including the sectoral coordination, will also be considered during the evaluation of the project proposal for funding.

Which organizations should undergo the SSHF eligibility assessment?

- New organizations that have not implemented any SSHF project and have a project in the current HRP.
- SSHF Partners who have not implemented SSHF-funded projects in more than three consecutive years.
- Existing SSHF partners who have been declared ineligible due to poor performance. If a partner consistently performs poorly and the risk rating moves from high risk to the threshold of ineligibility, the partner will be rendered ineligible based on poor performance. Ineligible partners can re-apply for capacity assessment 12 months after being rendered ineligible, if the areas of weakness have been addressed. This includes organizations that receive an ineligible status following a Capacity Assessment.

What are the minimum requirements for an organization to undergo the SSHF eligibility process?

All organizations who wish to engage in the eligibility process must first ensure that all minimum requirements are met:

1. **Registration Certificate**: Partners must submit a valid registration certificate. It must be in South Sudan and/or from the home country (international NGOs).
2. **Recommendation letter from at least one cluster**: The letter must recognize the minimum technical capacity of the partner for implementing humanitarian projects. Additionally, the cluster should consider some of the following: partners’ attendance to cluster meetings and consistent reporting to the cluster (3Ws, 4Ws etc.) and partners’ active demonstration of implementation of activities on the ground. This needs to be signed by a national cluster coordinator or co-coordinator within the last 12 months, not state cluster coordinators.
3. Must have a project in the **current year’s Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)**.
   a. **Programmatic expenditure/budget** should be equal or more than **US$ 200,000** in the last 24 months. We cannot accept internal expenditure reports in Excel or other formats. The following documentation will be required to evidence $200,000 expenditure in the 24
months since the Call for Expression of Interest: For Implementing Partner, copy of signed Donor Grant Agreement(s). For Sub-Implementing Partner, MoU with Lead Partner.

- Copy of signed and certified donor financial report(s) with transaction listings generated from the accounting software or any double entry spreadsheet.
- Copy of bank statements for the last 24 months and signed bank reconciliations.
- Copy of the external audit report (institution and/or project audits).

Only those organizations that meet all the outlined minimum criteria will proceed to subsequent eligibility process steps.

**What are the eligibility process steps?**

The Eligibility Process has three separate steps each with its own function:

- **Step 1: Statement of Interest:**

  This stage determines whether an organization meets the minimum requirements to undergo a full assessment. Only when all above minimum criteria have been met and following a Call for Expression of Interest for new partners, via the Clusters, prospective national and international NGOs working in South Sudan who are interested in receiving funding from the SSHF must first make a ‘statement of interest’ by submitting the following information:

  - Registration form.
  - Copy of the valid Registration Certificate of the NGO.
  - Copy of the mission charter and/or constitution of the organization.
  - Copy of the passport or identity card of the organization’s Executive Director.
  - Recommendation letter from at least one cluster coordinator.
  - Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) Assessment (if existing and only if conducted by another UN Agency within the last 12 months).

- **Step 2: Due Diligence/GMS Registration:**

  If an organization meets minimum and the Statement of Interest requirements, the prospective NGO partner will be invited to register in the Grants Management System (GMS). Once the NGO profile has been activated in the GMS, partners will initiate the due diligence process by filling out and submitting the due diligence application form on the GMS as well as upload all relevant documentation required for OCHA to complete the capacity assessment process. The documents required to be uploaded in the GMS are outlined in the Eligibility Process document (on SSHF website) and include manuals and policies, annual reports, financial statements and audit reports, governance documents and five signed UN Declarations.

  After submitting the due diligence application, HFU will thoroughly review the information as they are critical to ensuring effective risk management. Therefore, due diligence applications can be rejected if the application is incomplete or if the implementing partner does not meet the minimum requirements. Implementing partners may then be asked to re-draft and re-submit their due diligence application. HFU will clearly communicate the number of times you can re-submit your due diligence application and the deadlines for submission.
**Step 3: Internal Capacity Assessment:**

If the Due Diligence information has been approved by the HFU the Internal Capacity Assessment (ICA) can be planned with the partner. A questionnaire is used to conduct the assessment and it is hosted in the Grant Management System. The assessment captures and scores key elements of partner capacity in the following categories: a) Due Diligence; b) Governance and Institutional Capacity; c) Programmatic Response Capacity; d) Coordination and Partnership Capacity; and e) Financial Capacity. The outcome of the assessment will determine the overall eligibility of the organization (Eligible or Ineligible).

Firstly, the assessment includes a desk review of documents submitted by the organization. An organization must score over 50% before HFU arranges a visit to one or more of the organization’s offices. The office visit enables HFU’s finance and programmatic staff to verify information submitted in the documentation.

At the end of the assessment OCHA HFU will share their findings and inform the organization whether it will become an eligible SSHF partner or not.

**Can an organization be given a grace period if it does not readily have all the required documentation to proceed with the eligibility process?**

**NO.** An organization wishing to participate in the SSHF eligibility process must ensure that all documents are in place and contain accurate and consistent information. OCHA HFU will not consider incomplete applications. As much as the eligibility process is ongoing, OCHA HFU will abide to internal set deadlines to ensure effective support to partners. Depending on how many organizations are being assessed at a time, the process will take anytime from three weeks to three months. Should the Organization fail to respond during the identified timeframe, the HFU will cancel the process.

**Does SSHF eligibility for funding guarantee funding?**

**NO.** Eligibility to receive SSHF funding assumes that the partner is deemed to have all the necessary/required capacity to manage funds and implement humanitarian projects. Decisions on the allocation of SSHF funds are taken by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for projects recommended through two distinct allocation modalities: **Standard allocation** (through a call for proposals) issued on a periodic basis at the discretion of the HC and linked to the priorities of the HRP; **Reserve allocation** (a certain percentage of the fund) is maintained to respond to unforeseen/emergency requirements or contextually relevant needs. The SSHF will use reserve allocations to fast-track support for projects which address emerging priorities.

**Can assessed NGOs deemed as “not eligible” be implementing partners of other UN agencies or NGOs using SSHF funding?**

**YES.** The decision to engage an NGO is at the discretion of the individual UN agency and/or NGO who is willing to sub-contract SSHF funds. Leading organizations are accountable for SSHF funds as OCHA’s signatory partner and are required to oversee the work of the sub implementing organizations and ensure that capacity is enough to ensure delivery of quality services. This involves strengthening capacity of the implementing organization, if necessary, as well as monitoring their performance, all reasons why sub-contracted NGO should share prior to any agreement, the SSHF Capacity Assessment Report with OCHA HFU key findings.
What are the procedures when a new organization needs capacity building?

It is not the mandate of the SSHF to build the capacity of organizations. However, the SSHF will support the capacity strengthening of its existing and new partners to ensure compliance. For new partners, particularly those that will have been assigned a high-risk rating, the fund will follow up on the address of the identified gaps as a way of supporting them to be better placed to access SSHF funding.

Does the capacity assessment assure an organization permanent eligibility to apply for SSHF funds?

**NO.** To remain eligible for SSHF funding, NGOs need to fulfil the following criteria:

- The partner has passed the SSHF capacity assessment (CA)
- The partners Due Diligence status in the GMS is approved
- The partner has no outstanding SSHF oversight and compliance issues

What will happen to partners that do not pass the eligibility process?

They must wait 12 months before applying again & coincide with a new Call for Expression of Interest.

What are the procedures for sub-implementing an SSHF project?

OCHA HFU is not involved in sub-implementing partner (sub-IP) selection, however you do not need to be an SSHF Partner to sub-implement an SSHF funded project. Sub-IP selection is decided by either the Cluster or the Lead Partner.

Many national organizations have undergone capacity building with Save the Children International and South Sudan NGO Forum and are able to implement humanitarian projects. Does this qualify for SSHF partnership?

**NO.** To qualify, all eligibility steps must be completed. Full details are on page 1, an overview is:

- Meeting all 4 Minimum Requirements
- Pass Step 1: Statement of Interest
- Pass Step 2: Due Diligence
- Pass Step 3: Internal Capacity Assessment

How can a new NGO get in contact with Cluster Coordinators?

New organizations can reach out to UNOCHA or the NGO forum to be signposted to the Cluster Coordinators for more information on the cluster operations and meeting schedules.
Minimum Requirement Questions

What happens if a partner fulfils half of the minimum requirements?

They cannot proceed to Eligibility Step 1. All 4 minimum requirements must be fulfilled before proceeding to Step 1 in the eligibility process. Please see the full eligibility process on page 1.

What about a new organization that does not have a recommendation letter from the clusters, can they seek partnership?

NO. All 4 minimum requirements must be met (see page 1), and the second minimum requirement is “Recommendation letter of at least one cluster recognizing the minimum technical capacity of the partner for implementing humanitarian projects”.

Is Programmatic expenditures or budget managed through Sub-Implementing for a UN or another organization be considered as qualification for the US$200,000?

NO. Budget expenditure reports must be strictly from the applying organization. Even if funding managed by the applicant may be in multiple small grants in the last 24 months, such will be accepted if the total is equal to or above USD 200,000. Sub-IP cannot or should not use financial reports from lead agency, as there is accountability of lead agency and not vice versa. Consideration may only be made where the Sub-IP was in charge of managing the sub-contracted budget through proper budget management structures, not just implementing activities on behalf of a lead partner for example, just distributing supplies cannot be considered.

What is the process and criteria for HRP selection?

The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is a document that is used for planning and managing humanitarian response in a crisis, through the development of a country strategy and cluster plans implementing that strategy. In addition, the HRP can be used as an advocacy and communications tool and as a resource mobilization tool. The HRP process follows a similar process as the SSHF eligibility process, however following a call for registration by UNOCHA through the clusters, guidance is provided on the key steps to be undertaken by organizations seeking to have a project in the HRP. Organizations will undergo the following steps that are also clarified at the time of the planning process.

a. User Login and Registration (registration is for organizations that have never participated in HRP projects).
b. Project Development.
c. Upload a new project on the Online Project System (OPS) or update current HRP projects on the OPS.
d. Project Vetting.

The HRP is not a fund and having a project in the HRP is not a guarantee of funding. HRP partner organizations will still need to raise bilaterally with donors. The advantage of having a project in the HRP is that donors are likely to consider the project as well-coordinated and part of a multi-year comprehensive humanitarian strategy. Cluster Coordinators provide specific guidance to their cluster partners on project development in line
with the cluster/sector strategy. Cluster/Sector Coordinators have the responsibility to ensure that only approved projects are presented to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for inclusion in the HRP. This is done by vetting the projects. The vetting is done by a panel established by the cluster/sector. Panels include at least the Cluster/Sector Coordinator, an international NGO, a national NGO, and the Cluster Gender Focal Point. The panel will use clear vetting criteria for the objective review of all projects, and the vetting discussion and decisions will be documented and kept for reference. The panel may approve or reject projects. It may also recommend that projects are amended in order to fit needs and fill gaps.

**Does having a project in the HRP, qualify for SSHF Partnership automatically?**

**NO.** To qualify, all eligibility steps must be completed. Full details are on page 1.

**Can an organization that is not in the HRP but is actively responding on ground undergo the SSHF eligibility process?**

**NO.** As per minimum requirement, an organization that has no project in the current HRP, despite actively implementing projects, will not be allowed to move forward with the eligibility process.

**Does participation in HRP mean having a project in HRP or implementing a Project funded by SSHF?**

It means having a project in the current year’s Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

**Can an organization that is implementing project(s) outside HRP be eligible to partner with SSHF?**

Having a project in current year’s HRP is one of our minimum requirements therefore, if an NGO does not have a project in HRP then it cannot proceed in the eligibility process.

**Are eligible SSHF partners restricted to implementing the projects in sector(s) the organization accepted under HRP?**

**YES.** Organizations apply under clusters where they have a project in the HRP and this is further validated by the clusters concerned.

**Does SSHF eligibility influence partner’s ability to submit proposals for the HRP or receive funding from bilateral and multilateral donors?**

NGOs can submit projects to the HRP via their respective clusters and in accordance with the HRP specific guidelines, irrespective of the SSHF eligibility status.

The results of the SSHF capacity assessments may not be suitable for other purposes or for use by other organizations and should always be considered in conjunction with other relevant information available since the assessment was concluded. Capacity assessments are commissioned by OCHA solely to determine the partner’s eligibility to receive funding from the SSHF OCHA is not liable for the use of SSHF capacity assessments or other eligibility related information by other bilateral or multilateral donors.

**Can a new organization that has never implemented or received any funding but is a member of HRP-2021, participate in the eligibility process?**

**NO.** Organizations interested in participating to the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) eligibility process MUST meet the minimum requirements on page 1.
Eligibility Steps Questions

What will happen for those who missed the deadline for the submission of the documents in the recent Call for Expression of Interest for new partners?

They will need to wait for the next Call for Expression of Interest. In recent years there has been a Call each year, however this is based on the needs of the fund. For example, if there are partnership gaps in our current pool of eligible partners then we may look for partners that can address these needs.

What happens when the RRC certificate expires within the period of review?

All documents that are valid before the Expression of Interest deadline will be accepted. Although, you will need to renew before reaching Step 2: Due Diligence.

How can an organization register for GMS?

OCHA HFU will contact organizations that are eligible for access to GMS during Eligibility Step 2: Due Diligence.

Organizations must first apply during a Call for Expression of Interest; meet all minimum requirements and successfully pass Eligibility Step 1: Statement of Interest, before HFU will consider adding an organization to GMS.

Can an NGO request a capacity assessment and how?

NO. An NGO seeking partnership with SSHF cannot seek a capacity assessment straight away. Please see full eligibility process on page 1.

Will OCHA share a capacity assessment report with the assessed partners?

YES. Organizations that undergo an internal capacity assessment will receive a report which includes key findings and recommendations.

Organizations that a) do not meet minimum requirements b) do not pass Eligibility Step 1: Statement of Interest or c) do not pass Eligibility Step 2: Due Diligence, will not receive a capacity assessment report.

For more information, contact the SSHF HFU on the following contact via SSHF email: ochasshf@un.org

Read more on https://www.unocha.org/south-sudan/eligibility