

# STRATEGIC EVALUATION

WFP's Use of Pooled Funds for Humanitarian  
Preparedness and Response (2009- 2013):

A Strategic Evaluation

**Evaluation Report - Volume I**

December, 2014

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Commissioned by the

**WFP Office of Evaluation**

Report number: OEV/2014/01



**World Food Programme**



## **Acknowledgements**

The evaluation team would like to thank all those who contributed to this evaluation. In particular, we are grateful to staff and management from WFP offices in Sudan, Somalia, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Mauritania, and to representatives of the Office of Evaluation and this study's Internal Reference Group and External Advisory Group, for their expert guidance and support.

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

### Context and Background

1. This evaluation considers the use of three pooled funds: the global-level Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF); and two country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) – common humanitarian funds (CHF) and emergency response funds (ERFs). These funds were established as a pillar of the humanitarian reforms, to facilitate adequate, flexible and predictable humanitarian financing. They contribute to the other humanitarian reform pillars by reinforcing the role of humanitarian coordinators (HCs), promoting cluster coordination, and strengthening humanitarian partnerships. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of pooled funds.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Pooled Funds**

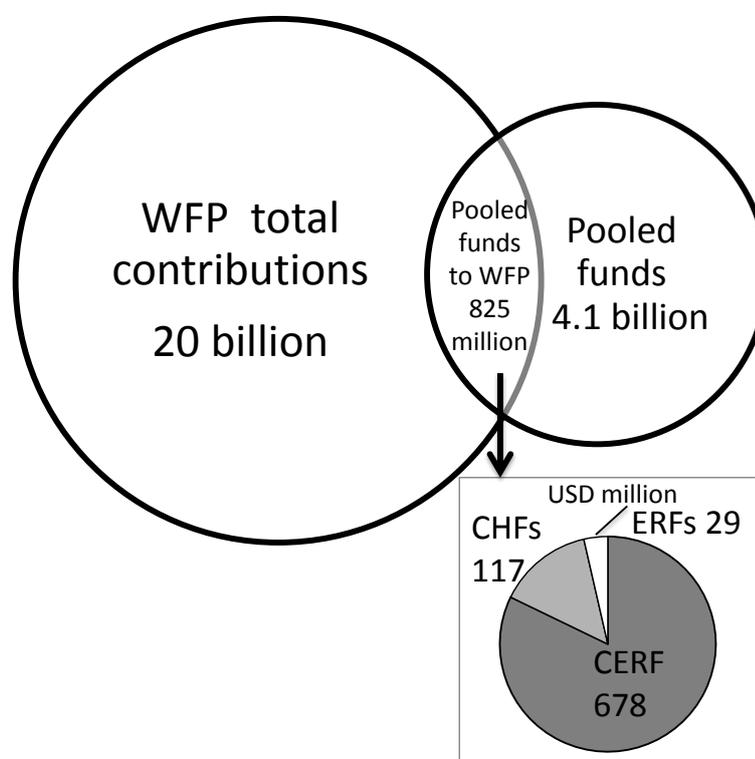
	<b>CERF</b>	<b>CHFs</b>	<b>ERFs</b>
<b>Established</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Total number of funds (2013)</b>	1 central fund	5 country funds	13 country funds
<b>Funding structure</b>	Unearmarked funding at global level Two windows: rapid response (RR) window is open for funding applications all year; underfunded emergencies (UF) window allocates funding twice a year	Unearmarked funding at country level Two windows: standard allocations window disburses twice a year; emergency reserve window is similar in function to an ERF	Unearmarked funding at country level Single funding window, generally open for funding applications all year
<b>Objectives</b>	RR: promote early action and response to reduce loss of life; help meet time-critical requirements UF: strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises	Provide early and predictable funding for critical humanitarian needs	Provide rapid and flexible funding for unforeseen, sudden-onset humanitarian emergencies

<b>Eligible recipients</b>	United Nations and International Organization for Migration (IOM)	United Nations, IOM and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	United Nations, IOM and – mainly – NGOs
<b>Fund size (per year)</b>	US\$450 million in grants – about two-thirds to RR and one-third to UF; US\$30 million in loans	US\$50–120 million per country	Less than US\$10 million per country
<b>Grant size</b>	Less than US\$1 million	Generally more than ERFs	Less than US\$500 000

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

2. As indicated in Figure 1, WFP received a total of US\$825 million from the three pooled funds over the 2009–2013 evaluation period. Although pooled funds account for a relatively minor portion of WFP’s total funding – approximately 4 percent of donor contributions – WFP is their largest single recipient. The CERF provides more than 80 percent of pooled funding to WFP, followed by CHF and relatively small amounts from ERFs.

**Figure 1: Pooled fund contributions to WFP, 2009–2013 (US\$)**



Totals may not add up because of rounding.

Sources: Total pooled funds – OCHA Financial Tracking Service; WFP total contributions – WFP Information Network and Global System (WINGS); pooled funds to WFP and breakdown of funds received by WFP by fund type – WFP weekly contribution statistics, analysis by the evaluation team, 2009–2013 grants only.

3. Pooled funds have principally funded three types of WFP operation: emergency operations (EMOPs) received 41 percent of total pooled funding in the reference period; protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) received 38 percent; and special operations received 21 percent. An internal WFP report on pooled funding mechanisms<sup>1</sup> recognized their strengths, including in financing gaps and traditionally underfunded areas of emergency response such as logistics or common services, and promoting coordination and information sharing. The report also noted that the scale of pooled funds was ill suited to supporting large food aid or logistics programmes.

### **Evaluation Features**

4. The evaluation analysed the use, added value and challenges posed by the use of pooled funds to the effectiveness and efficiency of WFP operations. It is part of a series of three WFP strategic evaluations<sup>2</sup> on emergency preparedness and response.

5. The evaluation investigated four main issues:

- a) the contribution of pooled funds to WFP's emergency response;
- b) complementarities between pooled funds and other financing instruments, and among different pooled funds;
- c) the impact of coordination mechanisms and pooled-fund partnerships on WFP's capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies; and
- d) factors affecting WFP's use of pooled funds.

6. Conducted in 2014, the evaluation encompassed the 62 countries in which WFP received CERF and CBPF funding between 2009 and 2013. The evaluation team drew on data from a literature review, secondary data sources, five country case studies – Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Philippines and Somalia – and an inception mission to the Sudan, interviews with key stakeholders, a survey of WFP country offices and issue-based case studies. Findings were triangulated to develop evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.

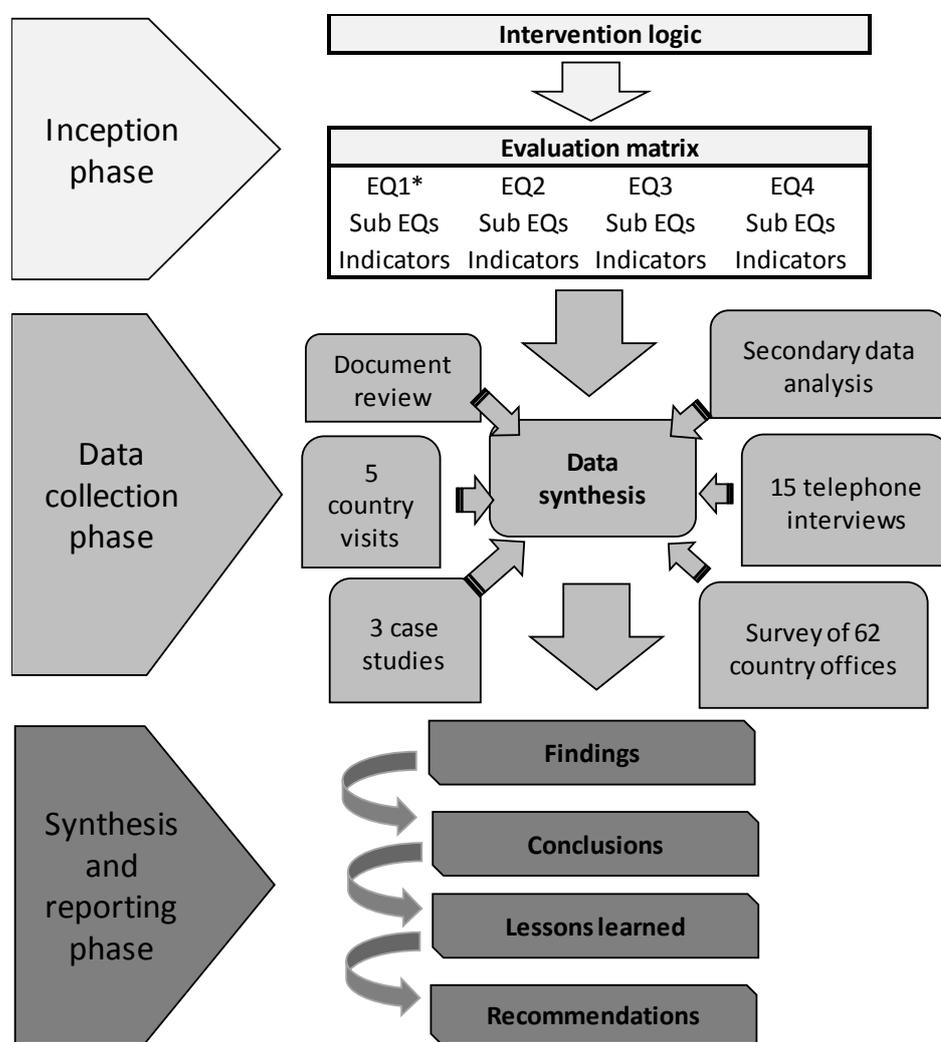
7. Challenges encountered during the evaluation included limited and inconsistent data, security constraints to field access, and staff turnover among key stakeholders. However, these limitations did not undermine the overall reliability or relevance of the evaluation's findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Mackey, H. 2008. "Pooled Funding Mechanisms: Background Paper for WFP Resourcing Strategy: 2008–2011". Bristol, Development Initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> The other two evaluations in the series are of the joint FAO/WFP global food security cluster and of the Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme.

**Figure 2: Evaluation methodological approach**



\* EQ = evaluation question

## Evaluation Findings

### Contribution to WFP's Emergency Response

8. Evaluation findings on how pooled funds contributed to WFP's emergency response included information on the funds' direct contribution to WFP operations, their coherence with WFP objectives and their impact on WFP's operational capacity.

⇒ *Contribution to WFP operations*

9. Pooled-fund grants are usually earmarked within EMOPs and PRROs. Where pooled funds were limited and needs large, grants were often targeted to make more

visible contributions to smaller-scale activities and to foster inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination. During country visits,<sup>3</sup> the evaluation found that pooled funding was often earmarked to support cash and voucher distributions and nutrition interventions. CBPF almost never financed general food distribution (GFD) as they were too small to make a meaningful contribution. However, the largest share of CERF grants was used to support GFD.

10. CERF grants were used to support twinning operations in the Philippines, Somalia and Sri Lanka. WFP viewed this use of pooled funds as important because many donors of directed multilateral contributions<sup>4</sup> do not finance twinning. Disagreement between WFP and the CERF Secretariat regarding WFP's application of indirect support costs to the in-kind portion has limited the use of pooled funds for twinning.

11. Pooled Funds financed a range of common services managed by WFP, including the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), common logistics services and pipelines, and shared operation hubs. Pooled funds covered 1 to 50 percent of individual operations, with an average of 16.2 percent.<sup>5</sup> They were a more predictable source of support for start-up costs than for operating costs.

⇒ *Coherence with WFP objectives*

12. WFP's applications for pooled funding remained closely aligned with life-saving criteria. However, there is continual debate in countries concerning whether the use of the CERF conforms with the key criteria for delivering life-saving assistance. The duration of grants from pooled funds was too short to fund preparedness or resilience-building activities. Given the continuing shortfalls in funding for emergency response, most respondents – including WFP managers – argued that pooled funds should retain their focus on life-saving activities.

⇒ *Impact on WFP operational capacity*

13. Overall, the CERF rapid response window contributed to enhancing WFP's capacity to respond rapidly to unforeseen needs. There were many examples of this facility helping to start a range of operations and catalyse subsequent directed multilateral contributions. Pooled funds were generally available to WFP before other directed multilateral donations (Figure 3), and were often one of the first sources of donor funds. However, the period between a sudden-onset crisis and confirmation that CERF rapid response funds were available to WFP averaged 55 days.<sup>6</sup>

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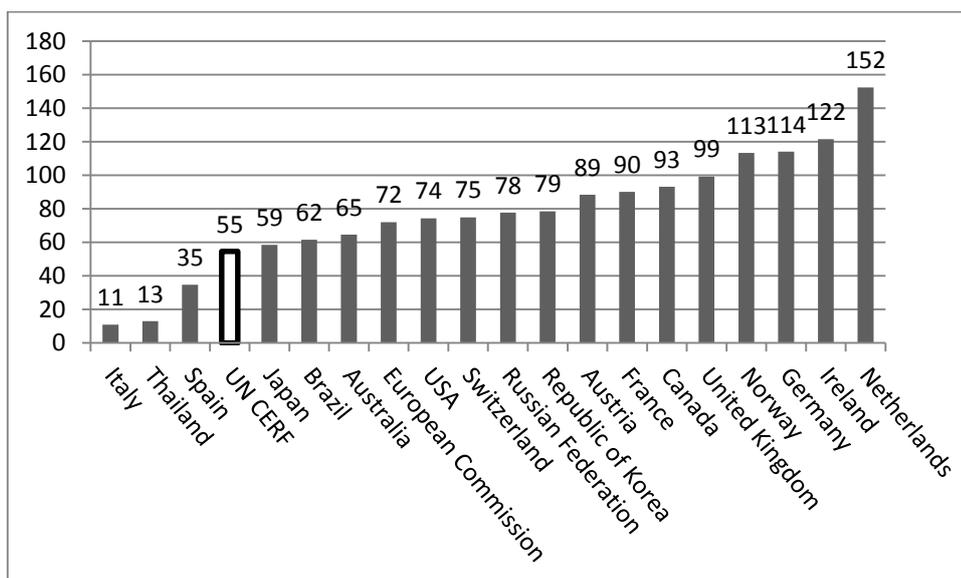
<sup>3</sup> WFP secondary data sources do not enable activity-level analysis by donor.

<sup>4</sup> For directed multilateral contributions, the donor determines the country programme and/or activities in which the contribution will be used.

<sup>5</sup> Figures refer to the subset of operations receiving pooled funding.

<sup>6</sup> Based on analysis of a sample of 28 operations responding to rapid-onset emergencies with clear start dates and receiving pooled funds. The date of approval of an immediate-response EMOP served as a proxy for the start date of a sudden-onset crisis; the date of exchange of a grant agreement – typically a contribution to the subsequent EMOP – was used as the estimated date of confirmed fund availability. This period should not be confused with the estimated actual time taken to respond, as WFP can initiate a rapid response using other resources.

**Figure 3: Average days between immediate-response EMOP approval and date for exchange of first directed multilateral donor contributions**



Source: WFP Standard Project Reports and weekly contribution statistics.

14. It took from 0 to 214 days to mobilize pooled funds. For very urgent needs – such as following typhoon Haiyan or the Haiti earthquake – CERF rapid response grants could be mobilized extremely quickly. Delays in the process were almost always associated with the steps (detailed in Table 2) controlled by the HC or the humanitarian country team (HCT).

**Table 2: Steps in Approval and Disbursement of CERF Rapid Response Grants**

1	Formulation of request to CERF Secretariat	HC/HCT
2	Revision/approval of CERF envelope	CERF Secretariat
3	Allocation of CERF envelope among United Nations agencies	HC/HCT
4	Disbursement of money to United Nations agencies, with agencies' counter-signature of grant approval letters	CERF Secretariat
5	Transferral of funds to field offices	United Nations agencies

15. Access to the CERF underfunded window was unpredictable and inadequate for the scale of WFP's needs. WFP's interpretation of what constitutes an underfunded crisis was inconsistent, ranging from situations where funding was uneven and slow to "forgotten" crises where donors provided minimal support and could be influenced by political considerations.

16. Pooled funds have helped to consolidate use of the gender marker in the humanitarian system. In keeping with the funds' requirements, WFP's proposals for pooled funding often include explicit commitments to women, generally through

targeting. However, in practice, the pooled funds were judged to have had little influence on how WFP addresses gender considerations in its programmes. Pooled funding processes rely on WFP's internal quality control mechanisms to ensure appropriate inclusion of gender dimensions in programming.

### **Complementarities with other Financing Instruments and among Pooled Funds**

17. This section presents findings on how pooled funds compare with WFP's internal advance financing mechanisms, their relationship to other multilateral donor funding, and complementarities between the CERF and CBPFs.

#### *⇒ Complementarities with WFP's internal financing mechanisms*

18. WFP has two advance financing mechanisms that enable it to start operations prior to securing contributions: the Immediate Response Account (IRA) and the Working-Capital Financing Facility (WCFF). These mechanisms are critical in providing initial financing for WFP operations and enabling timely response. Access to the IRA is particularly rapid as WFP Country Directors have delegated authority to release the first US\$500,000 within 72 hours. The WCFF and the IRA provided more than three times as much financing to each operation as pooled funds did.

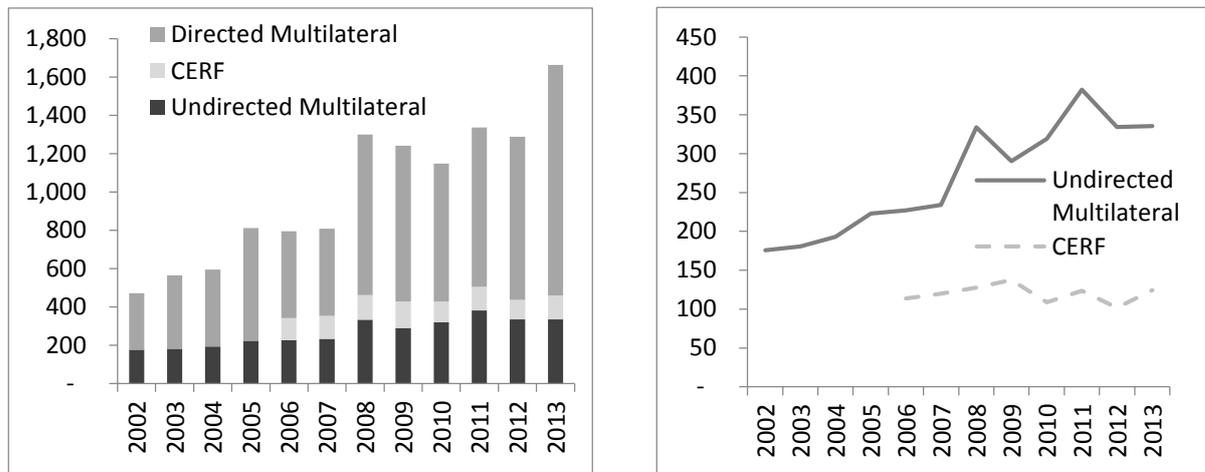
19. Pooled funds are routinely employed in conjunction with internal financing instruments, which they reinforce by providing additional early financing, revolving the IRA, and providing collateral for release of the WCFF, and cash for release of food from the Forward Purchase Facility. The CERF's flexibility in allowing repayment of internal loans is valuable, as many donors impose restrictions on the use of their contributions for repaying loans.

#### *⇒ Complementarities with other multilateral funding*

20. Most donors of directed multilateral contributions also contribute to pooled funds, which offer the added value of lower transaction costs to donors and promotion of coordinated – and consequently higher-quality – response. Other benefits, such as timely response and filling of critical gaps, can also be achieved with undirected multilateral contributions to WFP.

21. Figure 4 illustrates how the introduction of pooled funds appears to have provided additional resources to WFP; at a minimum, pooled funds have not been associated with diminished multilateral donations. Through pooled funds, WFP obtains access to a significant number of donors that do not contribute through other channels. Of the 117 donors contributing to the CERF over the reference period, only 75 provided directed multilateral contributions to WFP.

**Figure 4: Trends in contributions to WFP from top 12 CERF donors, 2002–2013 (US\$ million)\***



\* Individual donor contributions to WFP via CERF are estimated by multiplying the amount a donor contributed to CERF in a given year by the proportion of total CERF disbursements to WFP in that year.

Sources: WFP Government Partnerships Division (PGG); CERF Secretariat; evaluation team analysis.

⇒ *Complementarities between the CERF and CBPFs*

22. There is a strong degree of coherence in the operation of the CERF and the CBPFs, and there are clear distinctions in the objectives, scale, timing and eligible partners of each fund. The same OCHA staff generally manage all pooled funds at the country level, promoting complementary approaches.

**Impact of Pooled Fund Partnership and Coordination Mechanisms**

23. This section summarizes findings on how pooled funds coordination and leadership mechanisms influence the design and content of WFP’s operations, the funds’ influence on humanitarian coordination and leadership, and the effects on WFP’s relationships with its cooperating partners.

⇒ *Influence of coordination and leadership mechanisms on WFP’s operations*

24. Access to pooled funds has enhanced the engagement of stakeholders – including WFP – in coordinated planning processes. Where available, common needs assessments and strategic response plans informed WFP’s design of pooled fund interventions. Peer review of applications by the clusters, the HCT and the HC minimized overlaps, provoked productive discussions of comparative cost efficiency and, to a lesser extent, helped fill gaps in response.

25. However, there was limited progress towards the broader ambitions of delivering innovative integrated programmes and promoting cross-sectoral collaboration, articulated in the humanitarian reforms and Transformative Agenda.

⇒ *Effects of pooled funds on coordination and leadership mechanisms*

26. The pooled funds had limited impact on coordination across the humanitarian system. While the funds encouraged wider participation in coordination processes,

partners cited other elements of coordination – such as information–sharing, strategic work planning, common assessments and standard setting – as major reasons for cluster participation. Overall, pooled funds worked better in reinforcing coordination structures than in solving the challenges of weak or absent systems.

27. During country visits, the evaluation team found that WFP had not consistently allocated sufficient resources to its cluster leadership responsibilities,<sup>7</sup> partly because of field managers' mixed perceptions on the value of cluster coordination. Pooled funds' support of clusters was generally limited to providing supplementary resources to reinforce coordination structures following a crisis.

28. Pooled funds were found to add to the HC's authority, although the size of the funds relative to the scale of WFP's operations meant that the HC's authority could not exert as much authority over WFP as over the other agencies. Ultimately, the qualities of the individual HC were regarded as being more important to the HC's influence than her/his capacity to allocate funding.

29. Effects on WFP's relationship with cooperating partners

30. Pooled funds have not led to significant changes in WFP's relationships with cooperating partners. The evaluation found that relationships with WFP depend more on the attitude of the WFP Country Director than on constraints imposed by the system. Some Country Directors seemed open to participative dialogue, while others continued to relate to NGOs as traditional implementing partners.

31. OCHA is demanding more information on the transfer of resources from pooled funds to cooperating partners, to improve risk management by CBPFs and to enhance the visibility of indirect CERF disbursements to NGOs. Full reporting on the use of individual grants from pooled funds would demand major changes in WFP budgeting and reporting systems.

32. A CERF analysis<sup>8</sup> of narrative reports from WFP country offices in 2012 found that it took an average of 42 working days from CERF disbursement to the first instalment reaching cooperating partners for rapid response grants, and 69 days for underfunded emergency grants. WFP data sources did not permit similar analysis for this evaluation, but field visits confirmed significant delays, which occur with all donor contributions. Strategies for mitigating bureaucratic delays included direct implementation by WFP, and NGOs' use of their own resources to commence operations.

### **Factors Affecting WFP's Use of Pooled Funds**

33. This section summarizes the main factors found to affect WFP's use of pooled funds.

34. The project-based approach of application and reporting processes for pooled funds implies that use of the funds incurs additional transaction costs. The application and reporting formats were found to be relatively straightforward, minimizing transaction costs, which the evaluation estimated as ranging from 3 to 7.5 days of country office staff time, at an average cost of US\$4,700 per grant. Additional financial reporting provided by Headquarters was estimated at US\$3,200 per grant. The total additional cost of US\$7,900 per grant represents an average overhead of 0.4 percent.

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<sup>7</sup> "Summary Report of the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009–2014)" (WFP/EB.2/2014/6-A).

<sup>8</sup> CERF. 2014. *CERF Sub-grants to implementing partners. Final analysis of 2012 CERF grants*. New York.

35. Transaction costs were judged reasonable compared with those of other funding sources. The general opinion of country offices was that the additional costs were acceptable for pooled fund grants over US\$500,000.

36. Much larger transaction costs accrue from WFP's engagement in coordination structures and processes – clusters, and to a lesser extent HCT meetings. However, these costs are not directly associated with access to pooled funds.

37. The quality of WFP's pooled funding submissions was highly variable. Guidance and training are available from OCHA, WFP and other sources. The regional bureaux and Headquarters can assist with quality assurance, but country offices do not generally ask for this. There is demand from country offices for additional targeted guidance and training in reconciling pooled funding processes with WFP systems.

38. The conditions attached to the use of pooled funds were constraining, but WFP managed them well. For example, despite the short six-month window for pooled fund expenditure, WFP spent most grants, only occasionally needing to seek an extension.

## **Conclusions**

39. It is evident that pooled funds are a positive addition to overall humanitarian funding arrangements, and WFP has capitalized on attributes of the funds to address specific funding requirements. The CERF rapid response window was seen to facilitate rapid response; to a lesser extent, the CBPFs also contributed strategically to operations. One respondent noted that pooled funds had become a useful “piece of the overall funding jigsaw”. However, it was unclear how the Central Emergency Response Fund underfunded emergencies window contributed to ensuring adequate response to underfunded emergencies.

40. The main added value of pooled funds comes from their relative timeliness, predictability and additionality of financing. There is scope to improve timeliness by bringing greater discipline to the HC/HCT process. While predictability has improved in Level 3 emergencies,<sup>9</sup> funding remains unpredictable for sub-Level 3 contexts, underfunded emergencies, common services and cluster coordination.

41. For WFP, there are strong arguments for retaining a clear focus on life-saving criteria to avoid diluting pooled funds in a context of significant underfunding. Preparedness, resilience-building and social assistance would be better supported through complementary funding instruments, as pooled fund modalities are not well aligned with these objectives.

42. Overall, the CERF and CBPFs were observed to work in synergy at the country level, with each fund having distinct and complementary objectives, mechanisms and partnerships. WFP was relatively consistent in its use of pooled funding, in line with the mandates, scopes and capacities of the respective funds.

43. The evaluation found that WFP's need for rapid financing is met primarily through internal advances, which offer advantages of timeliness, volumes and flexibility. However, pooled funds have an important role in the mobilization of internal advances by providing collateral and revolving advances.

44. Evaluation findings reaffirmed that pooled funds are well matched to funding common services operated by WFP. There is strong common interest in using them for this purpose, except for funding cluster coordination costs, which are best covered

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<sup>9</sup> Declaration of a system-wide Level 3 emergency leads to an automatic CERF rapid response disbursement of US\$20–25 million.

by more predictable budget sources; however, pooled funds may usefully supplement the financing of coordination costs in large-scale emergencies.

45. Reconciling WFP’s large-scale operations with the project funding model of pooled funds remains challenging. The earmarking of pooled funding for specific activities within WFP operations increases transaction costs, constrains the flexibility of response and does little to improve the quality of response. There appears to be need for a compromise that acknowledges the efficiency and effectiveness gains of WFP’s operational approach while ensuring that WFP assists OCHA in discharging its responsibilities to donors.

46. WFP has engaged in coordinated strategy development and project appraisal mechanisms to obtain access to pooled funds. There is evidence that WFP’s pooled fund applications are consistent with common assessment findings and strategic response plans. However, there has been little observable change in the substance of WFP’s programmes or the nature of its engagement with partners.

47. WFP could benefit from more clearly defined responsibilities for and leadership of pooled fund processes. A lack of clear and simple practical guidance specific to WFP to aid country office staff in developing applications for pooled funding results in inconsistent quality of pooled funding proposals and reports. Internal standards and responsibilities for quality control are unclear, including the support that regional bureaux and Headquarters can provide to country offices.

48. Several aspects of pooled fund monitoring arrangements are weak or inappropriate. Reporting at the project level – rather than on overall operations – is demanding and adds little value. The requirement for reporting on “pass-through” of funds to cooperating partners raises specific problems. There is also insufficient assessment of pooled funds’ contribution to the broader goals of more timely response and the institutionalization of humanitarian reforms.

## Recommendations

49. All recommendations are directed to WFP. However, many issues identified implicitly require the attention of pooled fund managers and donors, who are encouraged to consider these recommendations.

Recommendation	Proposed Responsibility
1. Maintain and strengthen the life-saving focus of pooled funds.	Partnership and Governance Services Department (PG), Geneva and New York
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that funding for core life-saving criteria was inadequate and the comparative disadvantage in supporting other functions.</i></p> <p>1(a) Advocate with donors on maintaining a focus on life saving across all pooled funds.</p> <p>1(b) Advocate with pooled fund managers on establishing a compliance and monitoring mechanism to ensure that life-saving criteria are respected in the</p>	

Recommendation	Proposed Responsibility
<p>HC/humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) prioritization process.</p> <p>1(c) Advocate for a significant financial augmentation of the CERF rapid response window to enable it to contribute more effectively and at appropriate scale to the core needs of affected populations.</p>	
<p>2. Reduce the earmarking of grants from pooled funds.</p>	<p>Government Partnerships Division (PGG), Geneva and New York</p>
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that earmarking adds transaction costs, constrains flexibility and does little to improve quality.</i></p> <p>2(a) Advocate for enhancing the flexibility of pooled funds by aligning grant contributions with WFP operations, rather than project-level activities.</p>	
<p>3. Clarify the criteria for using grants from the CERF underfunded emergencies window.</p>	<p>PGG and the Office of the Deputy Executive Director (DED)/ Chief Operating Officer (COO)</p>
<p><i>Based on the conclusions regarding the unclear contribution of CERF underfunded emergency grants.</i></p> <p>3(a) Review and adapt the criteria used by WFP to identify underfunded emergencies to prioritize crises that are both underfunded – as opposed to experiencing temporary cash-flow difficulties – and emergencies, as opposed to operations that address chronic poverty.</p> <p>3(b) Advocate with pooled fund managers on clarifying the criteria for making allocations from the CERF underfunded emergencies window to forgotten emergencies.</p>	
<p>4. Increase the capacity of WFP to utilize pooled funds as collateral for the release of internal advances.</p>	<p>PGG and Budget and Programming Division</p>
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that pooled funds have a complementary role in supporting the deployment of internal advances.</i></p> <p>4(a) Building on existing mechanisms, increase the risk appetite for using advance funds by using early forecasting of CERF contributions as a basis for releases. Consider the use of generic forecasts and broader collateral, rather than firm forecasts of specific grants.</p>	

Recommendation	Proposed Responsibility
4(b) Support the establishment of clear definitions and protocols for activation of the CERF rapid response facility in Level 2 and Level 1 emergencies, and advocate for their system-wide introduction.	
5. Enhance the contribution of pooled funds to the operation of common services in emergencies.	
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that pooled funds are important in funding common services.</i></p> <p>5(a) Advocate with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals for an inter-agency review of funding of common services through all pooled funds – CERF and CBPFs</p> <p>5(b) Advocate with the CERF Secretariat to: i) develop inclusive guidelines on use of the CERF rapid response facility in financing all common services – not just UNHAS – including financing of cluster coordination costs and ii) specify the use of Level 3 CERF rapid response activation in financing the start-up of common services.</p>	<p>Geneva</p> <p>Common Logistics Services Division, Emergency Preparedness Division</p>
6. Consolidate fulfilment of WFP’s coordination responsibilities to improve support for effective use of pooled funds.	
<p><i>Based on the finding that WFP has not consistently allocated sufficient resources to fulfilling its cluster leadership responsibilities.</i></p> <p>6(a) Clarify the corporate position and expectations regarding country offices’ responsibilities for cluster/sector coordination where WFP is the lead/co-lead, including performance targets and accountability arrangements.</p> <p>6(b) Ensure that the indicators on cluster performance included in the 2014–2017 WFP Management Results Framework are incorporated into relevant country office performance plans, monitored and reported on at the corporate level at appropriate times.</p>	<p>Office of the DED/COO</p> <p>Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP)</p>
7. Define strategic and operational responsibilities for using and reporting on pooled funds at all levels.	PGG
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that responsibilities for pooled funding processes are poorly defined.</i></p> <p>7(a) Define the respective roles and responsibilities of Headquarters units, regional bureaux and country offices in managing pooled funding processes to</p>	

Recommendation	Proposed Responsibility
<p>enhance the credibility of and accountability for the application process.</p> <p>7(b) Develop and implement a training package for both online and face-to-face delivery.</p>	
<p>8. Enhance the quality, efficiency and utility of monitoring and reporting on the use of pooled funds.</p>	
<p><i>Based on the conclusion that aspects of monitoring arrangements are weak or inappropriate.</i></p> <p>8(a) Negotiate limiting the contents of narrative and financial reports to information that is necessary for the management of pooled funds and that justifies the additional transaction costs.</p> <p>8(b) Review WFP Standard Project Reports to assess whether they could be aligned with a revised reporting format for pooled funding, and generally be considered fit for purpose by donors.</p> <p>8(c) Systematically apply relevant corporate key performance indicators from WFP’s Management Results Framework to track the response times for sudden-onset emergencies, and report on performance through the Annual Performance Report. Performance on the specific indicators should be analysed in depth, including by breaking down processes into sub-steps when relevant.</p> <p>8(d) Advocate with OCHA for the clarification, monitoring and reporting of all steps – not just the CERF Secretariat’s responsibilities – taken to release CERF rapid response grants, including processes under the jurisdiction of the HC/HCT.</p>	<p>RMP and Finance and Treasury Division RMP</p> <p>RMP and country offices</p> <p>PGG and New York</p>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Evaluation features

1. This evaluation is part of a series of three concurrent WFP strategic evaluations<sup>10</sup> addressing the theme of emergency preparedness and response (EPR). This evaluation analyses the use and benefits of pooled funds (PF) in WFP's preparedness and response, including its work with implementing and coordination partners.

2. This evaluation provides an analysis of the use, added value and challenges posed by the use of pooled funds (PFs) to the effectiveness and efficiency of the World Food Programme's (WFP's) emergency preparedness and response. The PFs under consideration are the global-level Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and two country-based pooled funds (CBPFs), the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) and the Emergency Response Fund (ERF).

3. The evaluation came about at the request of the WFP Executive Board (EB), following a recommendation from the 2011 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-commissioned evaluation of the CERF. This evaluation broadened the scope to include the two CBPFs in order to analyse the PFs' complementarity and coherence from a single agency perspective. It includes analysis of the complementarity between the PFs and WFP's own internal financing mechanisms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's response (see Vol. II Annex 5). The Terms of Reference for the evaluation are provided in Annex 1 (in Volume II).

4. The scope of this evaluation encompasses the 62 countries in which WFP received CERF and CBPF funding between 2009 and 2013. This evaluation does not evaluate the direct impact of PFs on food and nutrition security or other services supported by PFs. The relatively low proportion of funding that comes from the PFs eliminates the possibility of establishing any causal link between operational results and PF contributions.

5. The evaluation approach was outlined in the ToR and refined and agreed during the inception phase. Figure 1 shows the sequencing and interrelationship of the activities conducted in each of the three main phases of the evaluation. A more detailed review of the evaluation methodology can be found at Annex 2 in Vol. II. The evaluation was conducted between February and July 2014, by a core team of four members, with a further two individuals undertaking internal Quality Assurance<sup>11,12</sup>.

6. The evaluation serves a number of stakeholders – foremost amongst these it is intended for the use of WFP management at country, regional and headquarters levels. The evaluation is also relevant to donors to the pooled funds, OCHA (including the CERF Secretariat and Funding Coordination Section), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF office), other United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors operating in countries where WFP and/or the PFs function.

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<sup>10</sup>The other two evaluations are the evaluation of the joint FAO/WFP Global Food Security Cluster (GFSC) and the evaluation of the Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme. Where possible, the approach and findings of this evaluation have taken account of these on-going studies.

<sup>11</sup> This is a team of independent consultants hired following a competitive recruitment process.

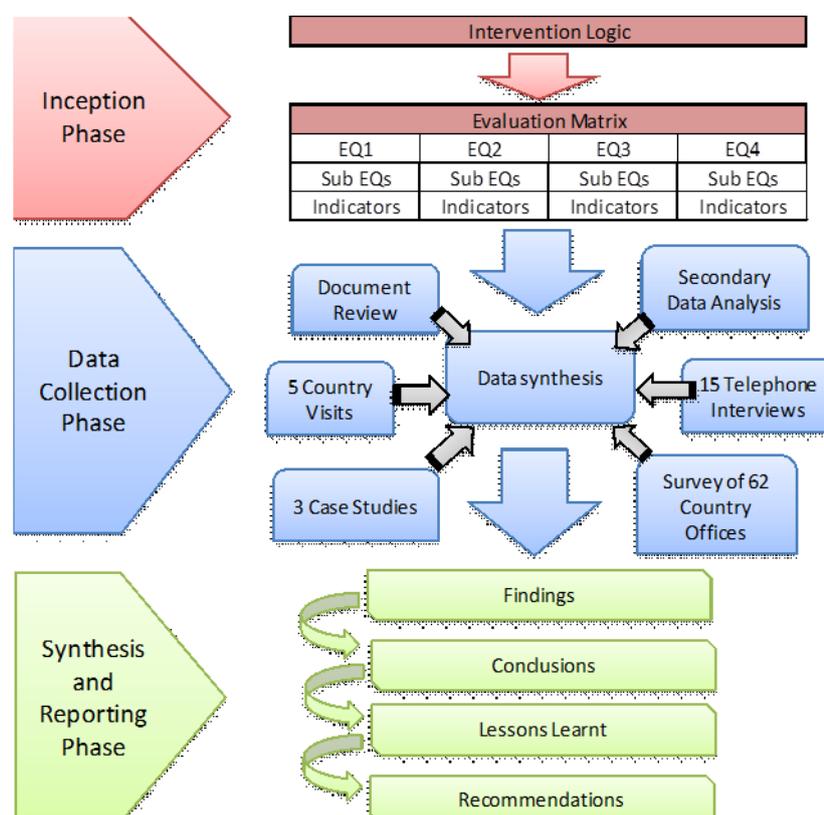
<sup>12</sup> In particular, the quality assurance panel is responsible for reviewing deliverables before submission to WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV), ensuring the relevance, credibility and practicality of the evaluation's approach and of its findings, and confirming that deliverables satisfy Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) standards.

7. Each of the PFs has its own agreed intervention logic (see Annex 3, Vol. II). The starting point for the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the generic logic of the PF mechanism has been realized at the agency level, and the extent to which PFs fit with WFP’s own strategic interests and needs.

8. The evaluation examined four main Evaluation Questions (EQs) listed below<sup>13</sup>. Full EQs (complete with sub-questions) are provided in Annex 4 of the second volume of the report.

- (i) What is the contribution of PF financing to quality WFP interventions and to enable WFP as a cluster lead agency?
- (ii) Is there an added value of PFs compared to other sources of WFP funding?
- (iii) How do the PFs’ partnership and coordination mechanisms contribute to WFP’s capacity to prepare and respond to emergencies?
- (iv) What are the main contributing/explanatory factors affecting WFP’s effective and efficient use of the PFs?

**Figure 1: Evaluation Methodological Approach**



9. The evidence base for answering the evaluation questions was constructed using the data collection tools outlined in Figure 1. Several challenges were encountered during the evaluation, however, the evaluation team does not believe that

<sup>13</sup> The original EQs specified in the ToR were adapted and agreed with OEV during the inception phase - full details are given in Table 1 of Annex 2 (Volume II).

these limitations undermine the overall reliability or relevance of the evaluation's findings. Specific constraints included:

- Some data proved hard to access at Head Quarter (HQ) and Country Office (CO) level – for example data on sharing of funds with partners. No secondary data was available on the transaction costs associated with the use of PFs.
- Data was inconsistent between different sources. For example data on PFs from WFP, the OCHA Financial Tracking Service and the UNDP MPTF Office sources was inconsistent. However the variance was relatively minor and unless otherwise specified WFP data was used.
- The choice of case study locations was constrained by insecurity.
- Staff turnover among key stakeholders in the field meant that knowledge on the use of PFs typically only extended to the last 2–3 years.

## 1.2 Background and Context

10. In June 2003 the major humanitarian donors agreed the *Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)*.<sup>14</sup> The GHD provided the impetus for reform of the humanitarian system along four mutually reinforcing pillars, namely humanitarian financing, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system, partnership among all humanitarian actors, and the cluster approach.<sup>15</sup>

11. The PFs considered by this evaluation were established as one of the pillars of humanitarian reform – to improve the predictability and reliability of financing for humanitarian emergencies. Furthermore, the PFs were intended to strengthen the other pillars by reinforcing the role of the HC under whose authority they fall at country level, promoting cluster coordination and strengthening humanitarian partnerships. This is evidenced in the PF intervention logics, which are presented in Annex 3, Vol. II.

12. In December 2011, the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) adopted the Transformative Agenda (TA), an agreed set of recommendations building on the earlier reforms to make the humanitarian response system more efficient and effective. Whilst the TA does not mention the role of the PFs there is an implicit expectation that the PFs should contribute to the TA. The Transformative Agenda focuses on three key areas: better leadership, improved accountability to all stakeholders and improved coordination. It provides guidance on mechanisms to deploy strong, experienced senior humanitarian leadership; on improved strategic planning; and on building capacities for preparedness and response at the inter-agency level.

13. As part of the TA, the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) has developed inter-agency programming guidance and products to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) with prioritizing and steering the collective response. Towards this objective, the IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) guidance was launched in 2013, replacing the CAP documents with a disaggregated set of programming tools. The first step was to separate the appeal documents produced for donors, from the management tools

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<sup>14</sup> See GHD. 2003. Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

<sup>15</sup> The cluster approach was introduced as a means to strengthen predictability, response capacity, coordination and accountability (Stoddard et al, 2007). It is a system of coordination in which a lead organization, designated for priority areas of response, is responsible for organizing coordination at global and country level, strengthening global preparedness, developing global guidance and acting as provider of last resort (Steets et al, 2014).

needed by an HCT to steer the collective response. The intent is to put in place a process and minimum set of products on the collective response that serve as country-level management tools through the lightest possible processes. At the same time, it is important to meet the information needs of humanitarian donors in support of their funding decisions.

14. Table 1 presents an overview of the key characteristics of the pooled funds. Further global statistics on the PFs can be found in Annex 10, Vol. II. Whilst there are clear distinctions between the objectives and modalities of the different PFs, there are also significant commonalities. Within the context of the specific objective each PF seeks to improve the coverage of humanitarian response, fill critical gaps, promote a timely response and improve the quality of response. In addition PFs were created as one of the four pillars of the humanitarian reform process, designed to integrate and reinforce the other pillars of coordination, leadership and partnership. The intervention logic of all three pooled funds demonstrates a self-reinforcing process where improved coordination and leadership are both inputs to the use of PFs and are in turn advanced through the use of PFs. These themes provide a common framework for the evaluation.

**Table 1: Objectives and Characteristics of CERF, CHFs and ERFs**

	<b>CERF</b>	<b>CHR</b>	<b>ERF</b>
<b>Established</b>	2005	2006	1997
<b>Total number of funds (2013)</b>	1 central fund	5 country funds	13 country funds
<b>Funding structure</b>	Unearmarked funding at global level Two windows: rapid response (RR) window is open for funding applications all year; underfunded emergencies (UF) window allocates funding twice a year	Unearmarked funding at country level Two windows: standard allocations window disburses twice a year; emergency reserve window is similar in function to an ERF	Unearmarked funding at country level Single funding window, generally open for funding applications all year
<b>Objectives</b>	RR: promote early action and response to reduce loss of life; help meet time-critical requirements UF: strengthen core elements of humanitarian	Provide early and predictable funding for critical humanitarian needs	Provide rapid and flexible funding for unforeseen, sudden-onset humanitarian emergencies

	<b>CERF</b>	<b>CHR</b>	<b>ERF</b>
	response in underfunded crises		
<b>Management</b>	Centrally managed, by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.	Country-based, under HC's authority, OCHA provide day-to-day management & UNDP MPTF Office undertakes financial administration	Country-based, under HC's authority, OCHA provide day to day management plus financial administration
<b>Eligible recipients</b>	United Nations and International Organization for Migration (IOM)	United Nations, IOM and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	United Nations, IOM and – mainly – NGOs
<b>Fund size (per year)</b>	US\$450 million in grants – about two-thirds to RR and one-third to UF; US\$ 30 million in loans	US\$50–120 million per country	Less than US\$10 million per country
<b>Grant size</b>	Less than US\$1 million	Generally more than ERFs	Less than US\$500 000

Source: OCHA [Country-Based Humanitarian Pooled Funds at a Glance; CERF Facts 2012; Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) for the Central Emergency Response Fund]

15. OCHA has recently decided to establish common administrative guidelines for the operation of CHFs and ERFs. The objectives for these funds would be formulated at the country level allowing them to flexibly adapt to the local context by incorporating varying elements of each fund. In light of this change the CHF and ERF are considered together under the label of CBPF and a distinction will only be made between the two when this is important for an understanding of past performance. A number of evaluations of the CERF, CHFs and ERFs have been undertaken since the funds were established, encompassing global, country-level, and single agency perspectives. Key findings from these evaluations are summarized and consolidated in Annex 11 in Vol. II. This evaluation has endeavoured to take account of and build on the findings of those evaluations, whilst offering the unique perspective of a single agency, looking across all three pooled funds. From these evaluations, and the general literature, the following common themes emerge:

- **Purpose:** Although the CERF adheres very strongly to its 'life-saving criteria', the question of whether CHFs and ERFs should adopt a broader defining of humanitarian action, and fund preparedness and risk reduction activities has been raised.
- **Transaction costs** have been widely claimed to be lower with pooled funds (e.g. Scanteam. 2007). However, some studies have found that whilst this may

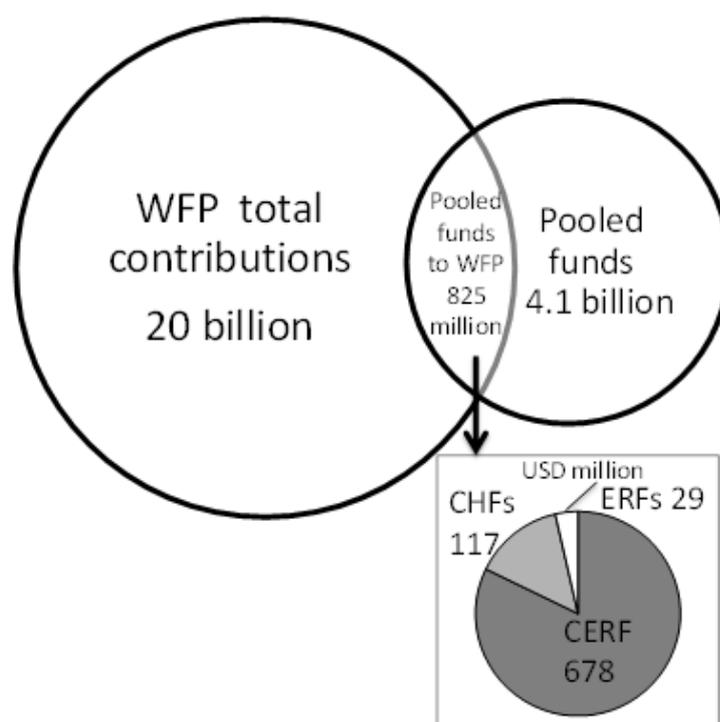
be true for donors, costs are in fact being transferred to implementing agencies and country level clusters, rather than reduced absolutely (Ball and van Beijnum 2010, Channel Research. 2011a and 2011b).

- **Timeliness & Utilisation:** Lack of timeliness in approval of funding and transfer of the funds is a widespread cause for concern regarding pooled funds (Scanteam. 2007), and there exists a long recognised trade-off between timeliness on the one hand, and inclusivity and transparency on the other. Implementing agencies, particularly NGOs, complained that the bureaucracy of dealing with pooled funds adds significantly to the transaction costs (Universalia. 2013, Channel Research. 2011a and 2011b), and WFP have undertaken their own internal review of cooperating- partner invoice clearance times (WFP. 2012a).
- **Accountability** should, by design, be more unified under a pooled funding arrangement. In practice this means donors may have to give up a large part of their oversight, with accountability shifting to the recipient of funds (Salomons et al. 2009). A lack of effective M&E is commonly identified as a short-coming of pooled funding (Commins et al. 2013, Channel Research. 2011a and 2011b). At the country level, UNDP (as a Managing Agent) and OCHA have a limited amount of responsibility, and usually a limited amount of capacity for project monitoring. Evaluation is beyond their remit and their technical capacity, leaving a gap in the system which has not been adequately filled.
- **Coordination:** Pooled funds have had a mixed impact on the cluster system. More agencies have become involved with clusters as a consequence of the availability of PFs through the cluster. However, managing the allocation process often poses major challenges for cluster lead agencies as it has not yet been matched by a commensurate transfer of human and financial resources to enable them to discharge these responsibilities (Channel Research. 2011b).

### **1.3 WFP's Strategic Directions in the area under evaluation**

16. PFs have provided approximately 4 percent of WFP's total donor contributions over the evaluation reference period (see Figure 1). The CERF is by far the most important PF for WFP, providing over 80 percent of the PF funding, followed by the CHF and relatively small amounts from the ERF.

**Figure 2: Pooled fund contributions to WFP (2009-2013 US\$millions)**



Totals may not add up because of rounding.

Sources: Total pooled funds – OCHA Financial Tracking Service; WFP total contributions – WFP Information Network and Global System (WINGS); pooled funds to WFP and breakdown of funds received by WFP by fund type – WFP weekly contribution statistics, analysis by the evaluation team, 2009–2013 grants only.

17. Although PFs account for a relatively minor portion of WFP’s income, WFP is nonetheless the single largest recipient of the PFs. WFP received a total of US\$825m from the three PFs over the evaluation period. The second largest recipient was the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which received US\$806 million.<sup>16</sup> However, the PFs account for a much higher share of total humanitarian aid received for UNICEF (17.1 percent according to OCHA FTS – see Annex 10 Vol. II)

18. The pooled funds have principally funded three types of WFP operation: Emergency Operations (EMOPs) received 41 percent of total pooled funding over the reference period; Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs) received 38 percent; and Special Operations (SOs) received 21 percent. Within the evaluation reference period, the pooled funds have contributed to projects across 66 offices: 62 countries, 3 regional bureaux and headquarters (HQ) in Rome. Further information on trends in WFP funding from the PFs as well as country-level data can be found in Annex 12, Vol. II.

19. WFP’s primary interest in the PFs has been from a resourcing perspective, and this is reflected in a number of corporate documents. As part of its 2008–2011 Resourcing Strategy, WFP commissioned a report on pooled funding mechanisms<sup>17</sup>. This recognised notable strengths, including the use of PFs to finance gaps and

<sup>16</sup> There is a discrepancy between OCHA FTS statistics and WFP’s internal Weekly Contribution Statistics regarding the level of pooled funding received by WFP between 2009–2013 (US\$ 794m vs US\$ 825m respectively). The bulk of this discrepancy is found in CERF figures, in the outlying years of the period considered. Reasons behind the discrepancy may include differences in the year to which specific grants are assigned, as well as potentially incomplete FTS reporting for 2013 grants at the time that data was downloaded. In each instance the report aims to specify which data source has been used.

<sup>17</sup> Mackey, 2008, Pooled Funding Mechanisms: Background Paper for WFP Resourcing Strategy: 2008-2011

traditionally unpopular areas of the emergency response like logistics or common services, and the promotion of coordination and information-sharing. At the same time, the report identified a risk of reduced directed and multilateral contributions as donors reroute funds through PFs, and that the scale was ill-suited to support large food aid or logistics programmes (Mackay. 2008; Mowjee. 2008).

20. The aforementioned report's findings and recommendations are reflected in WFP's revised resourcing strategy, in which WFP sets out its aspiration to increase support from PFs, and to channel it to the most appropriate programmes, in particular prioritising the use of these funding sources for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and other common services, such as the cluster lead for logistics and telecommunications (WFP. 2010d).

21. WFP is conducting an internal Financial Framework Review to continue efforts to provide financial systems that are 'Fit for Purpose' by increasing the predictability and flexibility of resources (WFP. 2014l). As part of this process, WFP has commissioned a review of its internal advance financing mechanisms, in particular the Working Capital Financing (WCF) Facility, which seek to improve timeliness by providing resources in anticipation of donor contributions, thereby enabling WFP to shorten the response time during emergencies.

22. As timeliness is a shared objective of the PFs, the synergies, redundancies and comparative strengths between the PFs and the internal advance financing mechanisms make up a core area of enquiry pursued in this evaluation. The development of internal financing mechanisms will need to take account of these findings.

23. The other main policy interest concerns how the use of PFs can reinforce and support wider commitments by WFP to the Transformative Agenda (TA) and partnership. This includes interrelated issues of empowering the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), coordination and accountability. Most directly, WFP has responsibilities for three global clusters – as lead agency for the Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters and co-lead of the Food Security cluster – as well as participating in several other clusters. No specific WFP policies or strategies were encountered on how PFs should be utilized to support WFP's participation in promoting the TA.

## **2. Evaluation Findings**

24. The findings in relation to each of the four EQs are presented in the respective sub-sections that follow. However, it should be noted that the narrative does not follow the exact order of the constituent sub EQs<sup>18</sup>.

25. Under each of the sub-headings, key findings are presented in grey boxes. The data supporting the respective findings is presented in the paragraphs which immediately follow.

### **2.1 Contribution of PFs to WFP's response**

26. The first Evaluation Question (EQ) asks "What is the contribution of PF to financing quality WFP interventions and to enable WFP as a cluster lead agency<sup>19</sup>?" This is answered under three sub areas: how PFs contributed to WFP operations; the

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<sup>18</sup> Annex 15 clarifies where each of the sub EQs has been answered.

<sup>19</sup> Findings relating to WFP's cluster lead role have been grouped and reported on in Section 2.3.

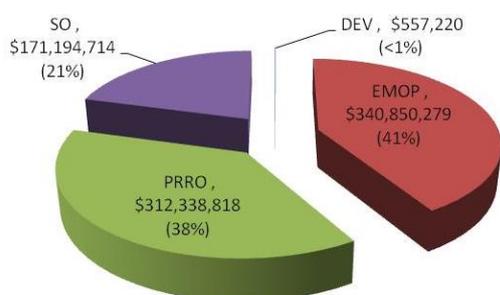
coherence between PFs and WFP objectives; and the impact of PFs on WFP's operational capacity.

27. Under this question the dimension of 'quality' is addressed through the consideration of timeliness, coverage and gender impacts. Other aspects of quality – including cost-efficiency, coordinated programming and support to innovation – are considered under the following EQs.

### 2.1.1 Contribution of PFs to WFP operations

**Finding 1:** The largest proportion of the PFs provided to WFP has been used to support food distributions through EMOPs and PRROs. PFs provide approximately 4 percent of total contributions to these operations.

**Figure 3: Use of PFs by type of WFP Operation**



Source: WFP Weekly Contribution Statistics (WCS)

28. Approximately 80 percent of the PFs contributed to WFP were directed to support Emergency Operations (EMOPs) and Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs). These operations are typically dominated by food distributions. It was not possible to calculate the exact share of PF used for food distributions as opposed to other activities included within these operations. However, it was confirmed during the country missions that the major share of CERF grants was used to support General Food Distributions (GFD).

29. PFs contributed a relatively minor share of total funding to EMOPs and PRROs, with total contributions of 4.3 percent and 4.2 percent<sup>20</sup> of funds received respectively.<sup>21</sup> There is a large degree of variability: the contribution of PFs ranged from 0.1 percent to 50 percent of the total contributions to EMOPs and from 0.1 percent to 26 percent of PRROs. The PFs were significantly more important to smaller operations.

**Finding 2:** Within EMOPs and PRROs PFs were important contributors to the component activities of cash and vouchers and nutrition due to considerations of scale, the cash based nature of PFs and the multi-sectoral nature of these activities.

30. In several countries PFs were noted to play a useful role in supporting cash and voucher distributions. Where WFP was short of cash, as opposed to in-kind contributions, the cash-based PFs proved important. Consequently there were several examples of earmarking PFs to cash and voucher activities. In the Philippines, cash-based PF resources were used to finance cash transfers and helped roll out a voucher scheme. Mauritania also utilized cash from a CERF grant for this purpose.

31. However, PFs did not always display this comparative advantage as donors are increasingly aligned in support of cash-based programming in general. In Ethiopia the cash-based activities were one of the best funded elements of the portfolio, supported through earmarked funds from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and

<sup>20</sup> Percentage of total contributions net of carryover, cost recovery and miscellaneous income.

<sup>21</sup> WFP Weekly Contribution Statistics. Unless stated otherwise, figures in the text are based on an analysis of the 217 operations which received PF contributions, rather than all WFP operations.

Civil Protection department (DG ECHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Germany, and as such the PF contributions were directed elsewhere.

32. CERF grants were also earmarked towards nutrition activities within EMOPs and PRROs and in some countries provided a large proportion of funding for these activities. A major driver for this was a question of scale. Where PFs were limited and needs large, there was a preference to use the PFs to make a more visible contribution to a smaller nutrition component, rather than the larger GFD element. The CBPFs almost never financed GFD as the funds were perceived to be too limited to make a meaningful contribution. However, WFP did receive CBPF support for supplementary feeding.

33. Nutrition activities attracted additional attention from all PFs as a multi-sectoral activity. In some cases PFs prioritized nutrition as a means to foster inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination – such as the 2013 CERF allocation in the Philippines (see section 2.3.1). In the case of Ethiopia the flexibility of the cash-based CERF contribution allowed WFP to buy supplementary foods for distribution, which were not available as in-kind donations.

**Finding 3:** CERF contributions were used on several occasions to support Twinning. Currently, there is disagreement between WFP and the CERF secretariat regarding the application of Indirect Support Costs (ISC) on the in-kind portion.

34. The CERF had been used on several occasions by WFP for the purpose of twinning (see Box 1 and Annex 7). Examples of this encountered during the field missions include using the CERF in Somalia to meet the distribution costs of 30,000 MT of Brazilian food commodities and the distribution costs of *plumpy'nut* donated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In the Philippines the CERF was used to support a Government of Philippines food donation to WFP.

**Box 1: Twinning of associated costs and Indirect Support Costs of in-kind commodity donations**

Twinning is the matching of contributions between two partners, and in particular the matching of an 'in-kind' (food) contribution by the Government of a Low Income or Lower Middle Income Country (LDC) to the financial contribution of a donor. The volume of twinned in-kind donations to WFP has increased tenfold in the past decade. It has evolved from an experimental modality to one that provided over 400,000 MT of food in 2013. Fourteen countries have provided the bulk of the food, with 13 others providing smaller contributions. Many of the donors of the PF also support twinning arrangements. The cash element of twinning contributions varies, but constitutes about 40 percent of the total value of the commodities. Advantages of twinning include that the modality:

- Broadens the donor base, including allowing Governments of LDCs to participate in humanitarian, relief and recovery actions
- Boosts the availability of food
- Fosters South-South and triangular cooperation
- Maximizes investment opportunities of Governments in their national programmes.

Constraints of twinning partially mirror those that have been typical of in-kind contributions. Thus twinning does not offer the same flexibility as cash contributions, which can be used and adapted to the types of food and expenses that are most appropriate for given situations. Costs

and logistics can be more complex. Challenges that are specific to the use of PF for twinning arrangements relate to the short time window of these emergency-related funds for purchasing and disbursement. WFP and CERF have failed to agree on a common position regarding the overhead costs which WFP charges, which has effectively put on hold the use of CERF funds for twinning arrangements.

35. The use of PFs to support twinning operations was viewed as important by WFP as many directed multilateral donors are unwilling to provide funds for twinning. However, the PFs have clarified that the 7 percent overhead should be limited to the cash portion (the CERF position), rather than paid on the total value of the donated goods and associated costs (WFP's position). WFP needs to recapture the full associated costs of the donation, and consequently would still need to identify a second cash donor to meet the full ISC costs. The CERF secretariat is guided by the United Nations financial regulations and rules and as such, a project support cost expenditure on a component that is not attributable to CERF is unacceptable. WFP contended that the use of PF for this purpose is still a cost-effective way of leveraging impact.

**Finding 4:** PFs play a significant role in supporting the start-up costs of common services managed by WFP including UNHAS operations, common logistics services and pipelines, and shared operational hubs. However, PFs were not a predictable source of support for on-going operating costs.

36. PFs comprise an important component of the funding of SOs to provide common services. PFs provided US\$171 million – equivalent to 16.2 percent of overall contributions<sup>22</sup>. This ranged from 1.4 percent to 50 percent of individual operations. A variety of these services were observed in the case study countries. PFs were used to finance UNHAS flight operations in most of the countries visited: Sudan, Somalia, the Philippines and Mauritania (see Box 2 and Annex 6). In Mozambique the CERF was used to finance common logistics services. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, WFP established and operated a common hub for humanitarian operations in Province Orientale with PF support. In Ethiopia WFP was funded to operate a common pipeline for Corn Soya Blend (CSB) and oil through a trust fund arrangement.

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<sup>22</sup> These percentages relate to operations receiving PF contributions (ie. not an overall percentage of all operations) and are net of carryover, cost recovery and miscellaneous income.

## Box 2: United Nations Humanitarian Air Service

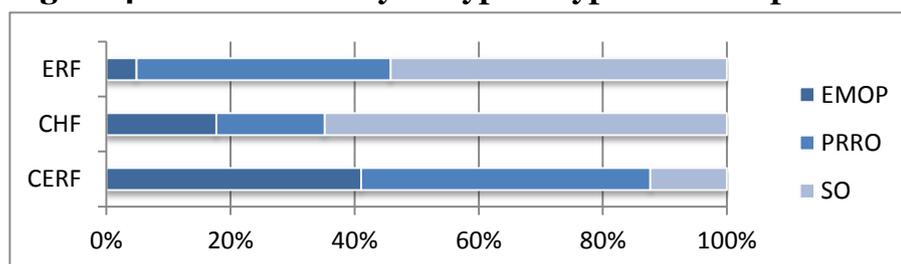
UNHAS – established in 2003 – has primary responsibility for the transportation of personnel and small cargo to areas of limited access. It operates on a system of leasing of aircraft and flight personnel. In 2014, UNHAS was operating in 14 countries. WFP manages UNHAS as part of its role as head of the logistics cluster. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in coordination with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) makes the decision to establish UNHAS. Policy guidance at a higher level and fund raising is done by an UNHAS Steering Committee (SC), and operational responsibility is in the hands of an UNHAS User Group (UG).

The growth of UNHAS is reflected in the budget and other figures. In 2009, UNHAS had a projected budget of US\$160 million for nine operations. By 2014 the projected budget had grown to US\$ 214 million. Globally, funding for UNHAS comes from a large range of donors, many of whom are also donors to the PF. In most countries, part of the costs for UNHAS are covered through cost-recovery schemes, which this evaluation found puts considerable financial strain on local NGOs.

UNHAS has been a consistent beneficiary of PF. The manner in which PF provide support varies. In some countries UNHAS gets a specific allocation through the PF (in this case from the CHF). In other countries no such priority is accorded, and UNHAS 'bids' together with other agencies/organizations for PF. A major constraint to UNHAS operations has been the erratic nature of funding which reflects the varying positions of donors regarding UNHAS funding. Funding is particularly problematic at the beginning of the year, as most funding contributions are only confirmed in March/April. UNHAS has had to function very much on a hand-to-mouth basis and to use threats of closure of services to mobilize resources.

37. The CBPFs play a particularly significant role in funding common services. A majority of the CBPF contributions were channelled to the SOs and the CBPFs provided a slightly larger absolute contribution – US\$96 million compared to US\$75 million from the CERF.

**Figure 4: Contribution by PF type to type of WFP operation**



Source: WFP Weekly Contribution Statistics; team analysis

38. There was an evident convergence of interests in using PFs to finance common services. From the WFP perspective responsibility for common services was viewed as a public good, mismatched with the individual responsibility for fund raising falling on WFP. Donor appetite for funding these services is limited as some donors – especially those contributing smaller directed amounts – prefer their WFP contributions to be used to finance more visible distributions to beneficiaries.

Consequently in Somalia the UNHAS SO relied principally on a small subset of donors; USAID, DG ECHO and DFID. Several donors viewed their CBPF contributions as explicitly meeting their responsibility towards common services and therefore declined to provide additional directed contributions.

39. WFP Country Directors (CDs) understandably prioritized their energies on fundraising for the core WFP operations. In many countries the responsibility for fundraising for common services was effectively devolved down to the officer responsible for managing the SO. The extent to which it was a WFP responsibility to fundraise for common services, as opposed to a shared responsibility of the wider community under the HC, was debated. At the HQ level it was noted that WFP Aviation has made progress in developing a funding strategy to support CO efforts (see Annex 6).

40. There was considerable willingness evident amongst the PF decision-making structures to finance common services. As these services benefit all agencies they aligned well with the collective decision-making structures of PFs. All CBPFs accepted the need to finance these common services and did not see a contradiction with a more general prioritization for funding NGOs rather than United Nations agencies.

41. Funding of common services was most acceptable in the case of establishing new services, or expanding existing services to accommodate surges in need. The CERF has a specific policy in favour of the use of CERF RR for this purpose (OCHA. 2011c). Equally, most CBPFs were similarly inclined to fund start-up costs. However, the PFs were generally resistant to providing predictable funding for the on-going operating costs of these services<sup>23</sup>. Consequently these operations had to continually compete against other proposals for PFs. In practice these services received annual CBPF allocations but typically on a crisis management basis to stave off an imminent scaling down or even closure of services. Sudan was an exception where the CHF firewalled an annual allocation specifically for common services and pipelines.

42. The arguments made for and against the PFs providing on-going financing of common services hinged on questions of cost efficiency. WFP COs argued that where there was greater predictability of funding in Sudan this resulted in cost savings, through a 10 percent discount on an annual aircraft leasing agreement. Conversely, fund managers in Somalia and Ethiopia argued that forcing WFP to compete for resources on an annual basis ensured strong scrutiny of the cost efficiency of services provided and ensured that the services did not unfairly compete against private sector providers.

### **2.1.2 Coherence of the PF and WFP strategic objectives**

**Finding 5:** WFP applications to PFs are closely aligned to "life-saving" criteria and the eligibility of its applications were rarely questioned.

43. A continual debate at country level concerned the conformity of the use of CERF funds with the key criteria of delivering 'life-saving' assistance<sup>24</sup>. Within the scope of the evaluation no assessment was possible of the extent to which WFP's PF interventions did in fact preserve lives. However, there was little questioning by stakeholders that WFP's PF activities fell within a category of interventions broadly accepted to have a life-saving objective.

<sup>23</sup> Given the inherent unpredictability of the CERF this issue related principally to the operation of the CBPFs.

<sup>24</sup> The CERF Secretariat has prepared written guidance on the definition of "CERF life-saving Criteria".

44. Within the EMOPs and PRROs, WFP was generally careful to only request funds for high priority immediate response activities including GFD, nutrition support and cash distributions which were closely aligned to the PF objectives. Conversely, activities which might be seen as more peripheral to PF objectives were routinely excluded. For example, in Ethiopia the PFs have not been used to support food distributions to the chronically food-insecure as part of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) pillar of the PRRO. The Somalia CO was explicit in keeping a life-saving focus and not requesting PF for activities such as school feeding.

45. Within the SOs, the emphasis was also placed on the immediate emergency response. For example, in Ethiopia the SO to build new bulk handling facilities in Djibouti is struggling to fill a funding gap to complete the civil engineering works but PFs were not pursued as a potential source of funds.

46. Occasional examples were encountered where the use of PFs was questioned, such as the case of Mauritania in 2012 where funds for the scaling up of services for a new influx of refugees from Mali were used for on-going programmes of support to refugees who had arrived earlier in the year. However, this was seen by the evaluators to be an exception. WFP managers were highly supportive of maintaining a narrow life-saving goal for the use of PFs. No one in WFP advocated that the scope of the PFs should be extended to address more developmental issues.

**Finding 6:** PFs did not exhibit a comparative advantage in funding WFP for preparedness or resilience-building activities.

47. Under the CERF, activities such as disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness, economic recovery and poverty reduction are not eligible for grants.<sup>25</sup> In contrast the question of whether CHFs and ERFs should adopt a broader definition of humanitarian action, fund preparedness and risk reduction activities has been frequently raised in evaluations (see Annex 11). Some CBPFs funds have supported restricted preparedness activities – for example, the Haiti ERF.

48. The OCHA Funding Coordination Section (FCS) suggested that the CBPF would be increasingly aligned to country level prioritization processes under the control of the HC, including the Strategic Response Plans (SRPs). This may open the door to supporting a wider set of objectives – potentially including preparedness and resilience.

49. WFP's mandate extends beyond the period of the emergency to include longer-term resilience and preparedness. WFP's Mission Statement and General Regulations stipulate that: "WFP will assist in the continuum from emergency relief to development by giving priority to supporting disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation"). This is captured in WFP's Strategic Plan in the Strategic Objectives (SOs) 2, 3, and 4. A gap in funding of preparedness and resilience-building activities across the humanitarian system has been widely identified and is supported in the literature (Harris. 2013). This was seen in all the case study countries that are faced with recurring disasters year on year. However, WFP was not seen to have attempted to use PFs for these elements of its portfolio. For example, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and preparedness were key areas of WFP's portfolio in the Philippines and resilience programming was a similar priority in Somalia – but PFs are not targeted to support these activities. In contrast, stakeholders interviewed during country missions observed that there was a common tendency amongst agencies whose emergency

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<sup>25</sup> However, they may be considered under the loan element if they are linked to humanitarian response.

mandates are more ambiguous to argue for the use of PFs to support DRR or preparedness activities.

50. There was little organizational support in WFP for expanding the use of PFs to meet these needs. Given the continuing shortfall in funding for emergency response most respondents argued that the PFs – and the CERF in particular – should remain focussed on a life-saving role. Only one donor met during the field missions expressed a view that the CERF funding should pay 'more attention' to early recovery.

### 2.1.3 Operational effects of PFs

**Finding 7:** The CERF RR window has positively contributed to WFP's capacity to respond rapidly to unforeseen needs.

51. Rapid response is key to WFP's mandate (WFP SO1 is to save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies) and the use of PFs in facilitating early response was a core concern for WFP. This is reflected in the use of PFs: the CERF is by far the most important PF for WFP, providing over 80 percent of the PF funding, and approximately two-thirds of the CERF funding has been provided from the CERF RR window<sup>26</sup>.

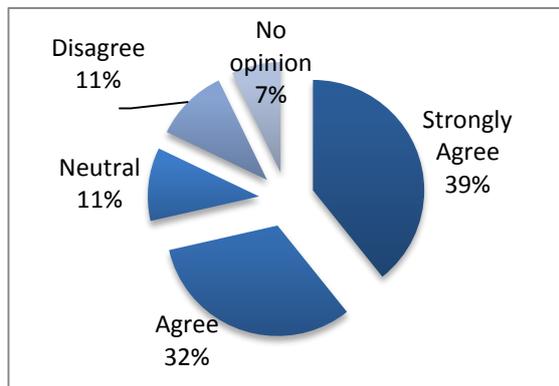
52. The CO survey showed a wide perception that the CERF had been effective in contributing to WFP's ability to respond rapidly – 71 percent of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with this statement. As expected, the CERF RR was seen as particularly effective in kick-starting operations.

53. In all countries visited examples were found of the positive contribution of PFs to enabling a rapid response. In Mozambique CERF RR funding was used in the early stages of the emergency response to droughts (2010), sudden refugee movements/situations (2011), and floods (2013). In Somalia the most notable use of the CERF RR was kick-starting the response to the 2011 drought response. In Ethiopia the CERF RR was recently used to initiate the response to the influx of South Sudanese refugees into Ethiopia.

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<sup>26</sup> The objectives of CERF RR are to provide grants for (a) sudden onset emergencies, (b) a rapid or significant deterioration of an existing humanitarian situation, and (c) time-critical interventions.

**Figure 5: COs agreeing that CERF improved the timeliness of WFP's response**



Source: CO Survey

54. PFs contributed to the start-up both of core food responses – including GFD, nutrition support and cash transfers – and of common services. In Mauritania the CERF was reported to have a crucial role in kick-starting the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) services to the southern part of the country. CERF funding was used to expand the airstrip which allowed UNHAS to launch its air service and funding has since been secured from other sources for continued operation of the flights. In Mozambique CERF funding was used to fund initial logistics (transportation essentially) for the whole humanitarian community at the time of

the floods, as well as to support the efforts to facilitate customs clearance for humanitarian agencies.

55. The country visits served as a reminder that the capacity of WFP to deliver a timely response depends on far more than the timely availability of money – whether from internal or external sources. Factors associated with a timely response included: having an established WFP Office in country; an understanding of local hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities; the ability to rapidly surge well-qualified and experienced staff to bolster capacity for assessment, planning and implementation; well-functioning coordination mechanisms; the speed at which commodities can be procured; and the speed at which cooperating partners are able to commence distributions on behalf of WFP.

56. WFP is analysing and addressing many of the constraints to early response through the Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme (PREP) programme, and its performance in that regard is the concern of another evaluation in this series on emergency preparedness and response. However, for the purpose of the PF evaluation, it was noted whilst a corporate indicator has been defined to monitor the time taken for WFP to respond to emergencies, this has not yet been institutionalized or reported on. In the absence of easily accessible data it proved difficult to further analyze the precise contribution of PFs to timeliness, vis-à-vis other issues.

**Finding 8:** In the case of urgent needs CERF RR grants could be mobilized within a week. However, the elapsed period between a sudden onset crisis and the confirmed availability of CERF RR funds was highly variable and averaged 55 days for sampled grants. Delays were associated with the steps in the process controlled by the HC/HCT.

57. The evaluation estimated the time lapse between a sudden onset crisis and the point at which CERF RR funds became available for programming by WFP<sup>27</sup>. An analysis of sampled grants found this to be an average of 55 days<sup>28</sup>. The period ranged

<sup>27</sup> A sample of 28 EMOPs were identified which had received a CERF RR contribution. The date of sudden onset crisis was proxied using the date of approval of IR-EMOPS. An IR-EMOP is assumed to give a relatively accurate approximation of the date of a sudden onset crisis and excludes slow onset and protracted crises from the analysis where the date of the triggering 'event' is more ambiguous. The date of exchange of grant agreements - typically as a contribution to the subsequent EMOP - was used as an estimate of the date of confirmed fund availability.

<sup>28</sup> Only the first donation made by each donor for each operation was considered. Any negative values (i.e. where date of exchange

from 0 to 214 days and half of the CERF grants were confirmed within 30 days. It is noted that the CERF RR instrument performed well when benchmarked against other directed multilateral funds (see section 2.2.2 for further details). This figure should not be confused with an estimate of the actual time taken to respond. WFP can initiate a rapid response using a variety of other resources (see section 2.2).

58. The country visits confirmed that the CERF RR could be mobilized extremely rapidly. When needs are urgent the allocation can be relatively straightforward. In the case of typhoon Haiyan the CERF grants had been registered in WFP's system within a week. In Mozambique, it took six days to get the CERF grant for the 2013 floods approved. Equally examples of very protracted processes were observed, including the response to refugees in Mauritania.

59. The disbursement of CERF RR funds involves several steps shown in the table below. The secondary data did not permit a further analysis of the time taken for each individual step.

60. Target times have been set for the disbursement process by the CERF secretariat – but only with regard to the processes that are under their direct control. The benchmark between final submission of grant request from HC and Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) decision is 3 working days (step 2 excluding revision process). Once the grant has been approved, funds are expected to be disbursed within 5 working days (step 4). In all countries visited the CERF secretariat were found to be extremely efficient and meeting these targets.

**Table 2: Steps in approval and disbursement of CERF RR grants**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>1</b>	Formulation of request to CERF Secretariat	HC/HCT
<b>2</b>	Revision/ approval of CERF envelope	CERF Secretariat
<b>3</b>	Allocation of CERF envelope amongst United Nations agencies	HC/HCT
<b>4</b>	CERF disburse the money to United Nations agencies on the basis of agencies counter-signatures to the grant approval letter	CERF Secretariat
<b>5</b>	United Nations agencies transfer funds to their field offices	United Nations Agencies

61. The other stages of the process, specifically those falling under the responsibility of the HC/HCT, were reported to be highly variable in length, often protracted and not routinely monitored. The initial question of whether to mobilize the CERF RR (step 1) could in itself be a protracted discussion in the HCT. Once this decision was taken the submission of a proposal depended on the speed of the slowest sector/agency preparing its submission as part of a consolidated request. Consequently delays in waiting for approval from headquarters (HQ) were reported to hold up the process of submission of the whole CERF process – for example in Mauritania this stage was reported to have taken several weeks.

62. Even after approval of a CERF envelope by the secretariat there could be further delays (step 3). In the case of the Central African Republic it was reported that the HC

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is occurs prior to IR EMOP approval date) were reset to 0. A cut-off of 365 days was used for CERF grants to exclude some extreme outliers.

had delayed the allocation of an approved CERF grant amongst the United Nations agencies. Other United Nations agencies – although not WFP – reported delays in receiving money from HQ (step 5).

63. The CERF relies on the humanitarian coordination structures – including an OCHA office in country – to facilitate the process. All countries visited benefitted from an established OCHA office. Stakeholder views indicated that the release of CERF funds was considerably slower in countries where these capacities were absent or weak.

**Finding 9:** The predictability of CERF RR grants (in the event of an unforeseen emergency) was a key consideration in their effectiveness in supporting a timely response. The Level 3 (L3) protocols have improved the predictability in the role of the CERF RR in responding to large corporate emergencies.

64. As discussed later (see section 2.2.1) the rapidity of WFP's response depends primarily on access to internal financing. However, the predictability of anticipated CERF RR grants has a direct bearing on the ability of WFP to make an immediate call on its internal financing mechanisms. WFP judged there was indeed a high degree of predictability in the release of RR funds, especially in the context of large, high profile emergencies.

65. Predictability has been further reinforced by the introduction of the L3 protocols, ensuring an automatic disbursement of US\$20–25 million on the declaration of a system-wide L3 emergency. Some teething issues were evident – for example, the question was raised of whether an automatic release was still appropriate in situations where the CERF RR had already responded prior to the declaration of an L3. In the case of CAR two allocations had already been made prior to the L3 declaration but United Nations agencies reportedly still expected a further allocation. Just how such automatic allocation would work in the absence of established in-country humanitarian leadership and coordination structures has also yet to be tested.

66. There is a secondary question of how predictable it is that WFP will benefit from an automatic CERF RR envelope. In almost all cases food is naturally seen to constitute a part of the initial response. However, there were some examples where WFP was initially excluded, such as in the response to Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines. In this case there was a presumption by the HC that WFP would be able to access food resources elsewhere and at the request of the Government the CERF was reserved by the HC for rubble-clearing activities through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNDP.

**Finding 10:** The PFs did not make a strategic contribution to WFP's ability to respond to urgent needs in underfunded emergencies.

67. WFP total operations over the evaluation period received 61 percent of the requested funding, with wide disparities between operations. Some PFs, particularly the CERF UF, sought to mitigate the unevenness of the voluntary humanitarian contributions system by targeting emergencies that have not attracted or are unlikely to attract sufficient and timely funding. WFP drew substantially on the CERF UF, receiving US\$194 million over five years.

**Table 3: Countries in which WFP has received more than 4 CERF UF grants (2009 – 2013)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ethiopia	3	2	2	1	1	9
Chad	1	5		1	1	8
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2	2	1	1	2	8
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	2	2		3		7
Djibouti	1	2	1	1	2	7
Central African Republic	2		2	2		6
Colombia	2	1	1	1	1	6
Niger	2	1	2		1	6
Myanmar	1	1	2		1	5
Somalia	1		1		3	5
Yemen	1	3			1	5
Côte d'Ivoire	1			3		4
Pakistan			1	1	2	4
Philippines		1		2	1	4
Zimbabwe	2		2			4

Source: WFP Weekly Contribution Statistics, grants 2009–2013 only

68. Several constraints were noted in the operation of the CERF UF window. Firstly, there is a low degree of predictability in the access to these funds. For Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) countries OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) data is used to give an indication of underfundedness. However, allocations ultimately depend on the level of 'competition' from other on-going crises, rather than an absolute shortfall in funding. For the non-CAP process there was a rather more complicated process whereby agencies proposed their own priority countries, following an internal review, based on needs versus shortfalls. At country level the receipt of a CERF UF grant was often perceived as an "unanticipated bonus" by WFP, other implementing agencies and donors alike.

69. For WFP's large-scale relief operations, the scale of CERF UF grants was poorly matched to the scale of the funding gap. For example, the 2013 CERF UF grant contributed US\$10m to WFP's PRRO in Ethiopia. In this case the contribution effectively covered half of one general food distribution round – leaving six rounds still unfunded. Whilst an appreciated contribution, this fell far short of a solution to the large challenge facing WFP Ethiopia.

**Table 4: Funding Gap (US\$) for WFP Operations**

	<b>All WFP Operations</b>	<b>Operations receiving CERF UF</b>	<b>Operations receiving CERF RR</b>
Total appeal		17,913,866,225	26,692,904,589
Total received (ex PFs)		12,013,320,537	18,994,084,735
Funding gap (excluding PF contribution)		33%	29%
PF contributions <sup>29</sup>		595,582,141	862,545,531
Overall funding gap	39%	30%	26%

Source: WFP Weekly Contribution Statistics

70. Differences of opinion were evident in what constitutes an "under-funded crisis". A distinction was seen between situations where funding was uneven and slow in coming and genuinely "forgotten crises" where donors provided minimal support and could be influenced by political considerations, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Within WFP there were repeated references to using the CERF UF as a means to avoid breaks in the food pipeline. An alternative view is that this was not the purpose of the CERF UF and that other more appropriate tools exist to smooth cash flow (see section 2.2.1). The design of the CERF UF window, with two rigid windows and relatively lengthy release processes, does not naturally lend itself to responding to anticipated pipeline breaks.

71. The data indicate that WFP operations receiving CERF UF grants were in fact marginally better funded than WFP's operations overall, even before the receipt of the CERF UF grant. CERF RR grants were even more likely to support ultimately relatively generously funded operations. This is in part because WFP operations overall include development activities which are on the whole ineligible for CERF funding, and are traditionally and on average less resourced than EMOPs and PRROs.

**Finding 11:** PFs have helped to consolidate the use of the gender marker within the humanitarian system but had little influence on how WFP addressed gender within its programmes.

72. Guidelines developed for the pooled funds by OCHA consistently reference the requirement for gender considerations in proposals and reporting (with the exception of the CERF UF guidelines, which have no mention of gender). The IASC Gender Marker is a mandatory requirement in all pooled funding mechanisms; this is a self-applied 0–2 coding system that checks the extent to which gender equality measures have been integrated into project design in the needs assessment, the activities and the outcomes.

73. For the CERF, agencies must describe the profile of beneficiaries and how gender equality is mainstreamed in project design and implementation. Similarly, gender disaggregated reporting is required. For the CBPFs, in addition to including a gender marker, proposal narratives require applicants to highlight how gender issues have been identified, prioritised, and considered in the design of the project as well as

<sup>29</sup> A significant degree of overlap is noted here as an operation receiving a CERF UF grant may have also received a CERF RR grant and vice versa.

in the implementation and monitoring, and to specify how the project will help achieve gender equality. In CBPF reports beneficiaries are disaggregated by gender but there is no specific section for narrative reporting on gender.

74. In keeping with the PF requirements, WFP's proposals to the PFs often have explicit commitments to women, often in the form of targeting (e.g. pregnant and lactating women), ensuring that women are equally involved in food distribution committees, and issuing ration cards in women's names. However, it was noted that there was no reference to gender in WFP's internal CERF guidance.

75. In practical terms, the PFs were judged to have little influence on how WFP addressed gendered programming. In Mauritania, Mozambique and Somalia, donors highlighted that they would like to see more gender-aware programming and follow-up, for example, by giving greater consideration to how food and non-food assistance might make women more vulnerable to exploitation (given that they have priority in distribution). In Mauritania specifically there were concerns about how the distribution of food to refugees had been handled (with food rations in the initial part of the response being distributed to leaders in camps rather than to women). In the absence of any verification and monitoring processes, therefore, the demands of the proposal and reporting content have little real influence. The PF processes essentially rely on WFP's internal quality control mechanisms to ensure appropriately gendered programming.

76. Some pooled funds (e.g. CHF Sudan, CHF South Sudan, CHF Somalia, ERF Pakistan) explicitly prioritize projects achieving the highest gender marker code (2a/2b) signifying that the project has made significant efforts to address gender concerns or the principal purpose of the project is to advance gender equality.

77. WFP has been working on mainstreaming gender within its own programmes and the main quality improvements are seen to emanate from this process. Under its gender mainstreaming accountability framework WFP has already adopted the IASC gender marker to assess and rate all project documents and grant proposals for their gender sensitivity, and more than 150 staff members have been trained on the marker (Betts et al. 2014a).

## **2.2 Complementarities between financing instruments**

78. The second evaluation question asked "Is there an added value of PFs compared to other sources of WFP funding?" This section reports on the findings and assesses the added value of PFs in financing an effective and efficient response.

79. In line with the sub-evaluation questions, findings are presented on how PFs compared to (a) WFP's own internal advance financing mechanisms, and (b) other directed and undirected multilateral<sup>30</sup> donor support to WFP operations. Thirdly, this section examines the extent to which the CERF and CBPFs provide complementary funding to WFP, when active in the same country.

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<sup>30</sup> In WFP definitions an (undirected) multilateral contribution is a contribution, for which WFP determines the country programme or WFP activities in which the contribution will be used and how it will be used and for which donors accept reports presented to the Executive Board as sufficient. For directed multilateral contributions the donor determines the country programme and/or WFP activities in which the contribution will be used and how it will be used.

### 2.2.1 Complementarities of PFs to WFP's internal advance financing mechanisms

**Finding 12:** Advance financing mechanisms established by WFP are extensively utilized by COs and exhibit comparative advantages of timeliness, volume and flexibility.

80. The WFP funding model relies on voluntary contributions which can vary significantly from month to month and are largely directed, at a minimum, to the level of country operations. This lack of flexibility and predictability undermines WFP's ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner, leaves operations vulnerable to pipeline breaks, and limits the ability of country offices to plan over longer-term horizons.

81. In response to this, WFP has introduced two advance financing mechanisms which enable WFP to start operations in advance of securing contributions, with the intention that these will be repaid once donor contributions are received. These are the Immediate Response Account (IRA), and the Working Capital Financing (WCF) Facility. Details of these are given in Annex 5 and summarized in the box below.

#### Box 3: Key characteristics of WFP's Advance Financing Mechanisms

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>IRA</b>	<b>WCF: Traditional Advance Financing</b>	<b>WCF: Forward Purchasing Facility</b>
<b>Established</b>	1991	2005	2008
<b>Purpose</b>	Immediate assistance in early onset/impending emergencies.	Loans to projects with forecasted contributions as collateral.	Food purchasing in advance of requests from projects on basis of aggregated needs.
<b>Ceiling of funds available (as of 2013<sup>31</sup>)</b>	US\$70m	US\$257m	US\$350m
<b>Collateral Requirement</b>	No	Yes: loans usually secured against high and medium probability forecasts for income	Upfront financing is required to purchase from FPF (IRA and WCF advances can be used for this purpose).

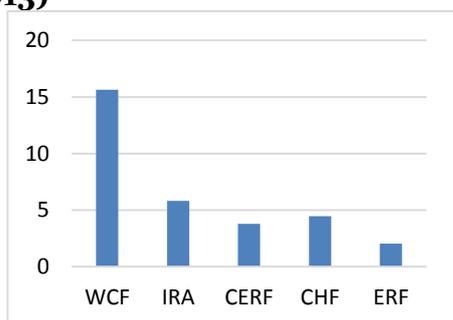
82. For country offices seeking urgent financing, the IRA and WCF project advances were reported by COs to offer a considerably more rapid funding mechanism

<sup>31</sup> At the 2014 Annual Session of the EB, the FPF was removed from the WCF facility and set up on its own as a "Global Commodity Management Facility" with a ceiling of US\$30m, backed by a dedicated US\$6m reserve. Corporate services financing was also taken out of the WCF and a separate ceiling of US\$70 M established for it. A new ceiling of US\$570m was approved for the WCF Facility, backed by the US\$95 million remaining in the operational reserve (i.e. maintaining the current leverage factor of 6:1). However, as these changes happened outside the timeframe of the evaluation, the 2013 configuration is referred to. (WFP. 2014n)

that the pooled funds. Once submissions are made, the advance financing mechanisms aim to respond to requests within 72 hours.<sup>32</sup>

83. The IRA application process in particular is very straightforward, where the CD has delegated authority to authorize the release of the first US\$500,000. WCF applications were considered to be more time-consuming for country offices because there is added requirement to demonstrate donor collateral. Applications to the WCF tend to be for larger amounts, often backed by multiple forecasted grants as collateral from a variety of sources.

**Figure 6: Average total value of PF Grants and Internal Advances per Operation (US\$millions) (2009-2013)**



Source: SPRs, Resource Situations

times as much as the PF grants per operation. Internal advances equated to approximately 12 percent of the funds used for these operations, compared to less than 4 percent from PFs. The WCF is the largest source of advance financing to operations when judged either in terms of average contribution to an operation or in terms of total amounts advanced.

86. Internal advances were used flexibly to support all aspects of WFP operations and are not subject to any earmarking restrictions in their own right, but are subject to the restrictions of the related collateral.

**Finding 13:** PFs are employed in conjunction with internal financing instruments and reinforce their function through providing additional financing, revolving the IRA, and providing collateral for the release of the WCF and cash to release food from the FPF.

87. PFs and WFP’s internal financing tools were frequently utilized in the same operations. Of the 217<sup>33</sup> WFP operations which received PF contributions over the evaluation reference period, 164 also received internal advances. This occurred most frequently in the case of CERF grants, but also for the majority of CHF and ERF grants.

88. PFs were found to work in synergy with the internal financing tools in a number of ways. Firstly they provide additional early financing. WFP’s operations are historically chronically underfunded – between 2010 and 2013, only 61 percent of WFP’s programme needs were funded.<sup>34</sup> The availability of advance financing has not grown in line with WFP’s increasing programme of work or demand. The current

<sup>32</sup> WFP, 2012a.

<sup>33</sup> This does not correspond to a sum of the CERF, CHF and ERF projects as some operations received contributions from more than one PF.

<sup>34</sup> Data provided by WFP donor relations, includes Contributions to IRA, Trust Funds, Special Accounts General Fund, fully flexible funds and pending allocations.

ceiling for WCF advances to projects is equivalent to 6 percent of the year’s projected funded programme of work (PoW), compared to a previous average during 2010-12 of 10 percent of the PoW.<sup>35</sup> As such, internal advances and pooled funding function are complementary and additional flows, rather than as alternatives.

**Table 5: Operations receiving PFs and Internal Advances (2009–2013)**

	<b>CERF</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>ERF</b>
Total number of operations receiving PF contributions	203	31	16
...of which also received internal advances	<b>159</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>
Percent of operations also receiving internal advances	78%	58%	69%

Source: WINGS, Resource Situations; team analysis

89. In the case of the CERF loan facility additionality was the only obvious value. WFP took a US\$27m loan in 2013 to reinforce the food pipeline to the Syria crisis. This current loan amounts to the majority of the US\$30m CERF loan facility. The explanation for the use of this loan was the exceptional demands on overall financing experienced in 2013, with a number of concurrent L3 emergencies. In this case the CERF loan facility provided a small buffer of additional resources. Secondly, PFs, which typically arrive as the first directed donor funds, have a role in revolving the IRA – PFs are grants and internal financing provides loans<sup>36</sup>.

90. The CERF has a valued flexibility in allowing repayment of loans, compared to many other donors who impose restrictions on the use of grants. Table 6 presents the preferences of the top 10 donors to the pooled funds in terms of whether they permit the use of their direct bilateral contributions for IRA revolvment or WCF collateral. In a number of cases the donor does not allow its direct contributions to be used for one or either of these functions, and in other instances it assessed on a case-by-case basis. As such, the pooled funds are enabling WFP to indirectly access funding sources for the internal financing mechanisms, which may otherwise be closed to them.

<sup>35</sup> WFP. 2014b; WFP. 2014c. An internal financial framework review is currently considering scope for a significant increase in the WCF.

<sup>36</sup> There is some degree of overlap as the CERF also includes a \$30m loan window and the IRA has a grant element.

**Table 6: Donors' conditions regarding support to IRA & WCF<sup>37</sup>**

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Allows IRA revolvment</b>	<b>Allows use as WCF collateral</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Case by case	Case by case
<b>Sweden</b>	Foreign Affairs: Yes	Foreign Affairs: Yes
	SIDA: Case by case	SIDA: Case by case
<b>Norway</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Netherlands</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Spain</b>	No	Case by case
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Ireland</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Canada</b>	Case by case	Case by case
<b>Germany</b>	BMZ, KFW: No	BMZ: Case by case
	Foreign Office: Yes	KFW, Foreign Office: Yes
<b>Australia</b>	Case by case	Case by case

Source: WFP, 2014d

91. Thirdly, PF forecasts are used for formal collateral required to release the WCF. However, only a minority of projects have used PFs for this purpose. Data extracted from WINGS indicate that PF grants totalling US\$179.4m have been used as collateral against internal advances, representing 22 percent of the total pooled funding received over the period. Less than one in five operations used PFs as collateral.

**Table 7: Operations using PFs as collateral for the WCF**

	<b>CERF</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>ERF</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total projects funded (2009-13)</b>	203	31	16	217
<b>Total projects utilising PF collateral</b>	37	6	1	42
<b>Percent used as collateral</b>	18%	19%	6%	19%

Source: SPRs, Resource Situations; team analysis

92. A number of factors conspire to limit the utility of PFs for this purpose, including the limited advance notice in the availability of PFs. The WCF loans are most effective where there is a long period between indications of forthcoming grant (when the WCF can be released) and the time it is paid (when the WCF loan is repaid). In Ethiopia the CO used CERF UF grants as WCF collateral, as these had a longer decision-making cycle (reported as 3–5 months), making it a more suitable form of collateral. In addition, the relatively small amounts of PF grants mean that PFs are not

<sup>37</sup> BMZ: Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Government of Germany); KfW German Development Bank; SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

generally used alone as collateral for WCF advances. WCF can be a time-consuming process and the amount of PF grant alone does not justify the effort.

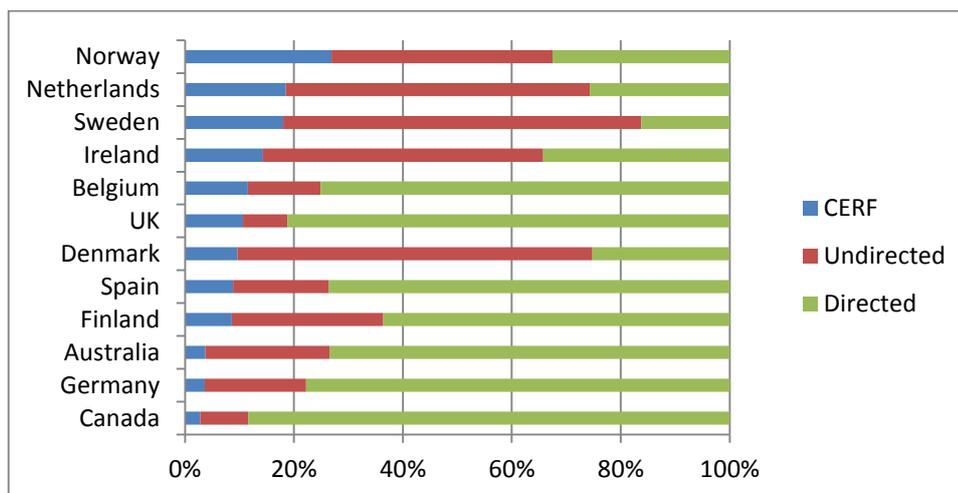
93. Finally, the PFs were reported to be an important source of funds to mobilize food from the Forward Purchase Facility. In the case of Ethiopia CERF grants were used to release food held in the FPF located in Djibouti and Ethiopia.

### 2.2.2 Complementarities with directed and undirected multilateral funding

**Finding 14:** Donors utilize a variety of funding channels to support WFP operations. Donors perceive that PFs not only reduced transaction costs, but also delivered a quality, coordinated response.

94. Donors use multiple channels to deliver funding to WFP, which in addition to PFs include the established channels of directed and undirected multilateral contributions.<sup>38</sup> Directed contributions are earmarked at a minimum to the level of the country operation, whilst undirected contributions are provided to WFP at HQ level with the allocation decision left to WFP. However, the ratio of individual donor contributions via i) PFs, ii) directed, and iii) undirected channels is highly variable (Figure 7)<sup>39</sup>.

**Figure 7: Ratio of donor contributions to WFP through CERF, Directed Multilateral and Undirected Multilateral Channels (2009-2013)**



Sources: WFP Donor Relations Government Partnership Division, CERF Secretariat; team analysis

95. A large majority of directed multilateral donors also contribute via PFs; of 107 directed multilateral donors 75 were also CERF donors. Over the reference period there were 48 undirected multilateral donors<sup>40</sup> of which 45 also donated to the CERF. For CBPFs there is a similar large degree of overlap.

<sup>38</sup> WFP terminology refers to 'multilateral donors'. Other organizations (e.g. OECD-DAC) would refer to this group as 'bilateral donors'.

<sup>39</sup> The contribution of each individual donor to WFP via CERF was estimated by multiplying the specific annual donor contribution to CERF by the percentage allocated to WFP by CERF in the corresponding year.

<sup>40</sup> Excluding United Nations agencies.

**Table 8: CHF Donors also providing directed multilateral and undirected multilateral in same country**

	<b>Total donors</b>	<b>Of which, also made directed contribution</b>	<b>... also made undirected contribution</b>
CAR Common Humanitarian Fund	4	3	3
DRC Pooled Fund	10	8	8
South Sudan CHF	8	5	8
Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund	9	8	2
Somalia Common Humanitarian Fund	16	12	6

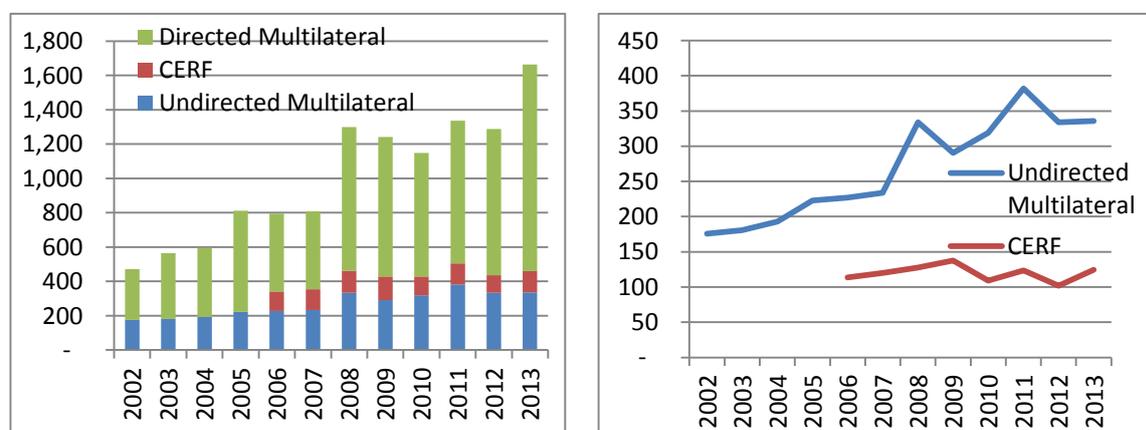
Sources: SPRs, Resource Situations, UNDP MPTF Office Gateway; team analysis

96. Whilst all the donor contributions ultimately funded operations, donors saw different benefits from using these parallel channels. In the case of PFs the predominant benefit was perceived to lie in promoting a coordinated and consequently higher quality response. Other benefits associated with PFs – such as reduced transaction costs, timely response and filling critical gaps – could potentially have been achieved through undirected multilateral contributions.

**Finding 15:** The introduction of PFs has provided additional resources to WFP. Overall, PFs have not been associated with diminished directed or undirected multilateral donations.

97. The introduction of Pooled Funds was seen to entail the possible risk of reduced income to WFP through other channels (Mackay. 2008; Mowjee. 2008). As PFs were a means to improve contributions to underfunded sectors, there was a concern that this might take place at the expense of comparatively better funded sectors such as food. More specifically, there was a concern that donors would redirect resources to PFs which had previously been channelled specifically to WFP as undirected multilateral contributions.

**Figure 8: Trends in all contributions (undirected, directed and CERF) to WFP from Top 12 CERF Donors 2002-2013 (US\$millions)**



Sources: Donor Relations Government Partnership Division, CERF Secretariat; team analysis

98. An analysis of funding patterns indicates that WFP’s overall funding has shown a consistent strong growth over the medium term. The introduction of the PFs (in 2005) was not associated with a drop in overall contributions. Most specifically undirected multilateral contributions – which were seen to be closest substitute for PFs – have continued to rise. Although interpretation of the data is complicated by the inter-annual variability in needs, it appears that PFs were additional to other donor contributions. No donor was identified who regarded the PF as providing their entire contribution to WFP operations. There was an agreement with the principle that additional funding directly to WFP continued to be required.

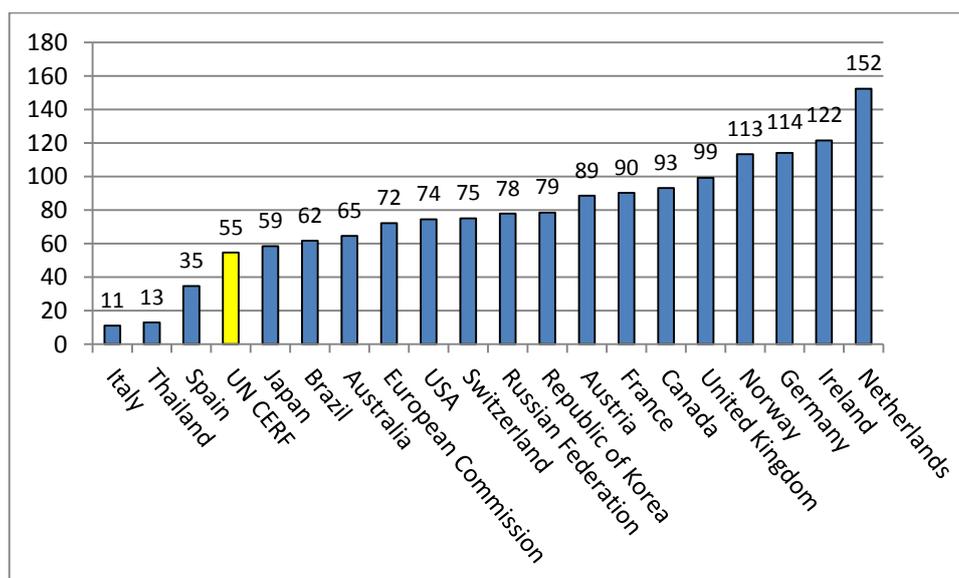
99. It was also noted that through the PFs, WFP benefits from a significant number of donor agencies who do not contribute through other channels. Of the 117 donors who contributed to the CERF over the reference period, only 75 provided directed multilateral contributions to WFP. Therefore the PFs give WFP potential access to an enlarged donor pool.

**Finding 16:** PFs are disbursed more rapidly than most directed multilateral funds and in a majority of cases are the first donor funds to be confirmed.

100. PFs generally performed well in the rapidity of releases in comparison to directed multilateral funds. In many cases the PFs were one of the first, if not the first, sources of donor funds provided to WFP, although some examples were encountered with slow PF releases, such as Mauritania.

101. The time between the approval of the IR-EMOPs and the date of exchange was analysed for the various donors (see para 58). This analysis was restricted to a sample of 28 operations responding to rapid onset emergencies with a clear start date of the emergency. In relative terms the data confirms the qualitative feedback given and indicates that the PF outperformed most other donors in its responsiveness. The data in Figure 9 suggests that whilst CERF grants were relatively quick, they were not especially quick in absolute terms.

**Figure 9: Average Days Between IR-EMOP Approval and Date for Exchange of First Directed Multilateral Donor Contributions**

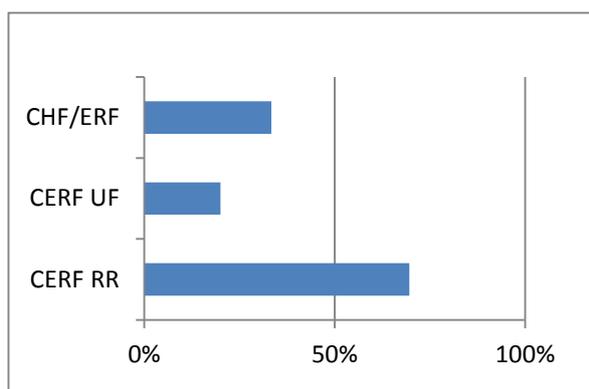


Source: WFP SPRs and WCS

**Finding 17:** PFs were used to kick-start operations and advocate for scale-up through directed multilateral funding.

102. WFP was highly dependent on directed multilateral contributions as the primary source of operational funding, which contributed by far the bulk of the operational resources needed.<sup>41</sup> Over the reference period directed multilateral contributions accounted for approximately 87 percent of the donor contributions. Consequently, the effectiveness of PFs was partly judged by their utility in attracting additional directed multilateral funding.

**Figure 10: Proportion of COs citing that PFs were used to kick-start operations by type of PF**



Source: CO Survey

reported that the PFs were helpful in leveraging other directed multi-lateral contributions. Interviewees reported that PFs could be used to kick start operations and 'bridge the gap' whilst the full strategic action plan was being developed and other donors were being approached.

105. These findings correlate with those of the country studies where interviewees were very clear in underscoring the important role of PFs in ensuring an early response and in having an 'incentive' function to pull in other donor contributions. Respondents also mentioned (in Mauritania and Mozambique) that the early response using PFs allowed the United Nations community to show a coordinated and early response to Government requests for support which augured well for the image of the United Nations.

106. In the Philippines in isolated instances the CO pursued relatively small PF allocations with a justification that the CERF allocation would confirm the validity and urgency of WFP's programme and could be used to advocate for other donor funding. However, no evidence could be found that donors do in practice take into account whether an operation has been selected for PF support as a criteria for their own allocation decisions.

103. WFP<sup>42</sup> internal CERF guidance explicitly highlights the role of the CERF RR to catalyse contributions from other donors, and states: "it is important that RR funds can be seen as being a catalyst for other funds where there are significant shortfalls. For example, when responding to a flash appeal, many donors look at the CERF funding level to determine their level of contributions."

104. The CO survey results indicate a perception at CO level that the PFs – especially the CERF RR – have some success in leveraging additional donor funds. Close to half of the COs

<sup>41</sup> This pattern of funding was driven by donor goals of promoting efficiency and effectiveness, alongside a strong interest in maintaining visibility for national contributions. There were no indications that this was likely to change in the short term.

<sup>42</sup> WFP, 2013, "Guide to Multi Donor Funds".

**Finding 18:** Important gaps remain related to the overall donor financing of food security that place unrealistic and unsustainable demands on the use of PFs. This includes using humanitarian operations (partly financed through PFs) to meet the needs of chronically food insecure caseloads.

107. Several of the countries visited included large caseloads of chronically food insecure people, including Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. Large numbers of these people relied on emergency programmes to meet their needs on a year-on-year basis. Although it concerns a smaller group of people, this is also quickly becoming the case in Mauritania. In the absence of sufficient alternative financing, large calls are being made on the PFs – especially the CERF UF – to meet these needs. It was questioned whether this is the right instrument to support these needs, in particular given the urgent and life-saving nature of the PF. Using funds for this purpose was also seen to undermine the capacity to address true underfunded *emergencies* or forgotten crises.

108. In Ethiopia it was argued that many of the current caseload of 2.4 million people targeted by the Humanitarian Response Plan were in fact chronically food insecure, rather than in an emergency. It was proving hard to attract emergency resources to meet these needs against 'competition' from acute emergencies such as Syria, CAR and South Sudan. Consequently a CERF UF appeal was being considered.

109. The inefficiencies of such an *ad hoc* approach to what are predictable needs have been acknowledged for many years. Shifting the chronic caseload to development financing (donor or host Government) was seen as attractive in terms of providing predictable, adequate financing. In Ethiopia the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) provides a constructive model for addressing chronic needs. In Mauritania work is on-going to move towards a longer-term resilience and development approach for dealing with chronic food insecurity. In Somalia and Sudan little progress has been made in establishing social welfare systems.

### **2.2.3 Coherence and complementarity between the Pooled Funds**

**Finding 19:** There is a strong degree of coherence and complementarity in the operation of the CERF and the CBPFs.

110. Two countries were visited where the CERF operates in conjunction with a CHF (Sudan and Somalia) and one country where it operates alongside an ERF (Ethiopia). In each country there was evident attention to ensuring coherence and complementarities in the use of these funds.

111. Distinctions are evident that allowed a clear differentiation in applications to these funds. The overarching objectives given for the PFs differ, with the CHF providing early and predictable funding in response to critical humanitarian needs and the CERF RR supporting rapid response and the CERF UF strengthening humanitarian response in underfunded crises. The timing of availability differs, with CHFs and ERFs providing predictable funding and with the CERF being triggered on an as needed basis. The PFs have different primary implementing partners, with the CERF being implemented by the United Nations and the CBPFs primarily through NGOs and to some degree by the United Nations. These partnership arrangements are reinforced by the respective scale of the instruments with the CBPFs generally being more modest in size – although in CHF countries the CHF typically provides more funding than CERF within a given year.

112. The CERF Secretariat have done a stock-taking exercise to develop best practice guidelines with respect to complementarity between CERF and CBPFs and advocated

a number of measures to ensure coherence. This includes using the same staff to manage both and harmonizing allocation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation frameworks. The 2011 five-year evaluation of the CERF found that in countries where there was a locally managed CHF, CERF funding integrated well into joint planning and monitoring of activities with cluster members, including national and international NGOs.

**Finding 20:** WFP utilizes the respective PFs in a relatively clear and consistent manner.

113. WFP displayed a relative consistency in how it utilized the PFs which was in line with the mandate, scope and capacities of the respective funds. The main interest of WFP with regard to PFs has been in the use of the CERF, where the grant sizes are better matched to WFP's operational needs.

114. WFP only made limited calls on the CBPFs due to the focus of CBPFs on supporting NGOs and the limited size of funding available. In the case of Sudan it had become a CO policy not to apply to the CHF outside of support to common services. However, it was generally agreed that it was important to maintain the option of funding United Nations agencies through the CBPF. Depending on the size of the fund and the operating context, United Nations agencies may be the most appropriate and effective way of meeting needs. It was also evident that in a more restricted funding context, such as seen in Somalia and Ethiopia, the incentive for WFP to apply is greater.

115. A small proportion of operations (29 operations out of 217 – 13 percent) received contributions from both the CERF and the CBPF. Where investigated this was found to be complementary rather than overlapping. For example, in one PRRO in Ethiopia the PFs supported different pillars within the same operation – CERF money was used to fund GFD and ERF money to fund supplementary nutrition interventions.

**Finding 21:** Various approaches are being piloted in a move towards using unified prioritization and allocation processes for all PFs. A model that is equally suited to the needs of the United Nations and NGOs has yet to emerge.

116. The latest CERF guidance is to use existing CBPF processes and structures to support CERF allocations, including common needs assessments, and vetting CERF proposals through CBPF governance structures. HCTs with a country-based pooled fund must report if and how CERF and the country-based pooled fund were used in a complementary manner to respond to the emergency; and if and how the structures, systems and processes for the country-based pooled fund were used for supporting prioritisation of CERF funds.

117. Progress in implementing this recommended set of good practices has been mixed. In all cases there was increasing consultation with the sectoral coordination groups in formulating CERF proposals, but decision-making remained with the HC/HCT. In the case of Sudan the last CERF UF round used the CERF funds to finance projects previously prioritized, but unfunded, by the CHF. A similar model was reported in South Sudan where the first call to meet needs was made on the CBPF, and this was then reinforced by the use of the CERF.

118. An integrated decision-making model was problematic at two levels for the CO. Firstly, WFP does not compete for CHF funds in Sudan on the basis that it did not want to 'crowd NGOs out' of a fund that was much more important to NGOs than to WFP. However, this decision left WFP initially excluded from consideration for

subsequent CERF funds. Secondly, standardizing on this model of decision-making imposes the much higher transaction costs of the CHF process on to the CERF allocation.

### **2.3 Partnership and coordination mechanisms**

119. The third evaluation question asked "How do the PFs partnership and coordination mechanisms contribute to WFP's capacity to prepare and respond to emergencies?"

120. The EQ is addressed in three sub-sections: (a) how the coordination and leadership mechanisms have influenced the design and content of WFP's Pool Funded operations; (b) how the PFs have influenced WFP's contribution to the appropriate implementation of the TA – including its responsibility for leading clusters, and (c) how the use of PFs influenced WFP's wider relationships with its cooperating partners.

#### **2.3.1 Influence of coordination and leadership arrangements on WFP's access to, and use of, PFs**

**Finding 22:** Where available, common needs assessments and strategic response plans are used as the reference point in the design of PF interventions by WFP.

121. All the countries surveyed during the course of the evaluation possessed some form of emergency coordination structures, including an RC/HC, HCT and variable permutations and formulations of coordination bodies. In Somalia and Sudan these were organized as humanitarian clusters, whilst in Ethiopia and Mozambique these were Government-led Sectoral Coordination Groups (SCGs), and in Mauritania a system of thematic groups was in place, with United Nations agencies leading the groups and Government participation in these structures. The evaluation did not see a country without coordination structures.

122. According to the context, the countries visited had produced elements of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) including common needs assessments and Strategic Response Plans (SRPs) that guide the overall humanitarian response. The assessment and SRPs were perceived by stakeholders to be inclusive and, although the quality was variable, the products were generally seen as credible.<sup>43</sup>

123. Where available the SRPs and underlying assessments were taken as reference points for the PF processes. These HPC products interfaced with the PF design process at several points. They were used to frame the initial submissions by the HC/HCT for the overall CERF funds, and for all PFs in prioritizing the use of available funds between sectors and in designing the content of projects within a sector. This applied broadly to the use of CERF and CBPFs, although the use of CBPFs was more intimately linked to the HPC. No cases were found where these products were ignored, although grants for rapid onset emergencies (from CERF RR, ERF, emergency window of the CHF) were *de facto* less likely to benefit from pre-existing products.

124. As a whole, the inter-agency HPC was deemed by WFP to be useful in facilitating an improved and prioritized collective response. An internal WFP survey of CDs saw respondents' ratings of the utility of the HPC averaging close to a score of 3 out of 5 (5 being the highest). Out of the five major components of the HPC, the strategic response plan was deemed as the most useful.

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<sup>43</sup> A parallel WFP evaluation provides a more comprehensive overview of the achievements of the Food Security Cluster.

**Finding 23:** WFP PF applications are peer reviewed and screened by various coordination structures, including the clusters, the HCT and the HC. The rigor of these processes varies, with impacts on the speed of approval, quality of proposals and transaction costs involved.

125. In all countries visited with a CBPF (Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia) the cluster/sector coordination body was the principal reference point for screening proposals. Whilst responsibility for formal approval falls on the HC, typically advised by a PF board, the concurrence of the coordination group is essential to the success of the application.

126. The transparency of this peer review process is acknowledged by stakeholders to have several benefits. It helped prevent overlaps, and to a lesser extent fill gaps,<sup>44</sup> in response. It was argued that this contributed to higher implementation standards – for all projects, whether funded or not. For example, several clusters in Sudan required SPHERE standards as a precondition for applications and in Ethiopia a Gender Marker of 2(a) was a minimum requirement.

127. In common with all applicants WFP applications to the CBPF are subject to scrutiny by other members of the clusters/ SCGs. Most stakeholders viewed this transparency positively. In Ethiopia – the budget scrutiny provoked productive discussions of comparative cost efficiency

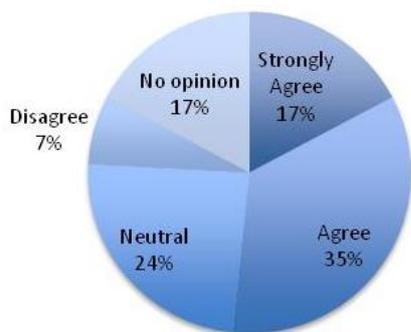
128. The main associated downside of the CBPF process is the transaction costs involved. However, a wide variation in transaction costs was evident and appeared to be particularly onerous in the Sudan case and relatively light and efficient in Ethiopia. Transaction costs can become problematic if the size of the fund shrinks, grants sizes diminish and competition and dialogue intensify. Current downsizing of fund size were witnessed in Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

129. The responsibility for the allocation of the CERF grants was found to rest with the HCT/HC. The HC/HCT is responsible for both negotiating the CERF envelopes with the CERF secretariat and, once an envelope has been agreed by the CERF secretariat, deciding on how this should be allocated between sectors. A lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of HCT members in relation to the HC was evident; in some cases the HC took a dominant role in decision-making, whilst in other cases decisions depended on consensus being reached amongst the HCT members.

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<sup>44</sup> The Food Security Cluster evaluation found more evidence of preventing overlaps than actively filling gaps. For further details see WFP, 2014, “FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action”.

**Figure 11: Does the CERF reinforce HC leadership?**



Source: CO Survey

130. Opinions on the extent to which the PFs have empowered the HCs were mixed. The PFs did reinforce the authority of the HC, although the size of the PFs relative to the scale of WFP's operations meant that the HC could not exert as much authority over WFP as over other agencies. Overall the quality of the individual was regarded as far more important to an HC's authority than their capacity to allocate funding. In fact the shortcomings of weak HCs were seen to be exposed through the exercise of control of PFs.

131. There was a desire for the HCs to be better capacitated to provide strategic direction and not just act as coordinators. Where major innovations had occurred these were not observed to come from the HC office. For example, a major innovation in Somalia has been an innovative strategic approach to enhancing the resilience of affected communities. This was driven by a tripartite United Nations approach (FAO, WFP, UNICEF) working in conjunction with an NGO consortium. This process has not been initiated, or promoted by, the HC.

132. Significant misgivings were expressed about the capacity and functioning of both HCs and HCTs by WFP managers. Consequently, key decisions around funding, guidelines, policies and approaches were reported to be made outside the HCT decision-making structures. An inclusive HCT was seen as an obstacle to technical discussion – for example, 29 United Nations agencies were members of the HCT in Ethiopia. For WFP the priority was seen to be managing the core relationships with key United Nations agencies: UNICEF, UNHCR and FAO.

133. The underlying methodology informing allocative decisions was opaque. In all countries the CERF allocations were discussed openly in HCT meetings. However, decisions were subsequently taken at the level of the HC and sub-groups of the HCT that were not always transparent or participatory, and on occasion were not well communicated. On the positive side, this model led to generally speedy decisions. There were relatively few complaints expressed amongst stakeholders, including donors, on the final distribution amongst sectors.

134. On the downside, a sense of agency level entitlement was reported to still pervade the process and reports of lobbying by all agencies were encountered in most countries (Sudan, Somalia, the Philippines, Mauritania). Competitiveness for resources by all agencies was evident, resulting in a lack of a collective strategy. WFP with some justification frequently argued that CERF funds are often diluted in appeasing the demands of multiple United Nations agencies, rather than being focussed on the most pressing emergency needs.

135. Equally, WFP was able to exploit the current system to actively stake a claim to PF resources. Other stakeholders saw WFP as a 'hard-headed' negotiator. Instances were cited where decisions had initially gone against WFP interests (Somalia 2011, Philippines 2012) but were subsequently reversed following senior-level WFP interventions. However, the clear impression was formed that all United Nations agencies – not just WFP – tended to operate in a manner that was protective of their own resources and assets.

136. Mozambique was an exception to this tendency. Four main factors emerged as having contributed to ensuring a strongly transparent prioritization process:

- Since the early 2000s Mozambique has consistently committed to and invested in strengthening coordination between donors and other partners and at sectoral level. Humanitarian coordination mechanisms are guided by the same principles and build on a strong experience of coordination
- In line with its commitment to coordination, harmonization and alignment, the Mozambican Government has played a strong role in leading on the humanitarian response.
- An effective early warning system and detailed contingency plans are in place. This limits opportunities for lobbying by individual agencies. It has also played a role in enabling the country to prepare rapid proposals for CERF submission, as very little additional discussion is necessary on prioritization. The CERF request for the 2012 floods, for example, was drafted in 24 hours.
- In between emergencies the cluster system stays active for the purpose of information-sharing between agencies, although the clusters do not meet. This facilitates communication and interaction when emergencies occur.

137. Tellingly, there was little apparent correlation between the quality of CERF proposals submitted and the funding received through the HC/HCT allocation process. Even though the quality of WFP proposals was criticized in several countries by the PF managers, the quality of proposals was never given as a reason for refusing funding. In Ethiopia the idea of a merit based sub window within the CERF has been piloted as an 'innovation'.

**Finding 24:** Despite the utilization of a collective planning framework and allocation mechanism there has been limited progress towards delivering innovative, integrated programmes.

138. The planning framework for PFs has helped to promote coordinated inputs by different agencies. For example, there was a continual challenge in WFP adequately funding NGOs through its Field Level Agreements (FLAs) and WFP encouraged NGOs to source their own complementary funds. Examples were reported of CHF funds used to fund complementary NGO activities in Somalia and DRC.

139. A more fundamental challenge was delivering coordinated inter-sectoral responses which linked food assistance to other sectors. Relatively little progress was observed on stronger cross-sectoral collaboration – it was possible that the use of PFs, where allocations are typically made within sectors, may even have reinforced a siloed approach.

140. Examples of United Nations agency-coordinated CERF applications were encountered: for example, a coordinated UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF proposal to respond to South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and a coordinated (UNICEF, WFP, WHO) response to floods in the south of the country. However, this was based on established mandates and inter-agency agreements rather than an innovation approach driven by the PF mechanism. Nutrition is another coordinated inter-sectoral programme which again was governed by established inter-agency agreements.

141. In the Philippines it was argued by other United Nations agencies that the CERF contributed to the foundations of inter-sectoral response by enabling a range of actors to have a minimum presence and assess needs within their sectors. Potentially this

benefits WFP as other agencies are better capacitated to fulfil their agreed inter-agency responsibilities.

142. Efforts to use PFs to drive an inter-agency agenda have encountered resistance. For example, in order to achieve greater strategic impact the CERF secretariat and HC proposed that all projects funded through the Sudan 2012 grant should be part of a coordinated effort to address malnutrition. However, agency resistance led to this directive ultimately being considerably watered down.<sup>45</sup> An example of an innovative inter-sectoral approach was the use of unified cash transfers in Lebanon to support multi-sectoral outcomes. However, the PFs were not seen to be part of resolving the challenge of how this gets coordinated across multiple sectors.

143. Questions were raised on how useful PFs are in promoting inter-sectoral coordination. Many of the most obvious candidates for inter-sectoral cooperation – nutrition, resilience and capacity building – by definition require longer-term interventions and are not an area of comparative advantage for short-term PF interventions.

**Finding 25:** WFP PF operations have not embraced collective monitoring arrangements under the leadership of the clusters.

144. Donors canvassed during the evaluation consistently referred to the need for stronger monitoring and evidence of impact in WFP operations. This is mirrored by a commitment within TA programming to strengthened collective monitoring arrangements led by clusters.

145. At best food security coordination groups were found to collect information provided by their members, but did not generally conduct independent monitoring. There were isolated cases in which the coordination mechanism played a strong role in supporting pooled funds and became involved in joint monitoring visits, for example, in Sindh province in Pakistan (Steets et al., 2014). In Somalia, a peer review of NGOs benefitting from CHF funds is being introduced to strengthen monitoring in the field. The FCS proposed a monitoring framework in 2013 and it was reported that this had been piloted in South Sudan. It was suggested that clusters were resistant to taking responsibility for PF monitoring partly because they lack sufficient resources.

### **2.3.2 Extent to which PFs support the development of WFP led clusters**

**Finding 26:** WFP's corporate commitment to humanitarian reforms is not always reflected at field level where coordination was seen as a lower priority by managers.

146. WFP bears the leadership, or co-leadership, responsibilities for three clusters: food security, logistics and telecommunications. WFP is also a member of the HCT in each country where this is constituted. The role of PFs in assisting WFP to discharge these coordination responsibilities has to be contextualized within an appreciation of the priority accorded to coordination by WFP itself.

147. Interviews with senior management confirmed a clear endorsement of the importance of coordination at the corporate level. Whilst there was acknowledgement of an ambivalent attitude taken by WFP to the initial humanitarian reforms, the point was made that WFP had subsequently taken a leading role in helping to formulate the TA. Senior managers expressed the need for WFP to adapt to being part of a more coherent and integrated humanitarian system, as articulated in the TA.

<sup>45</sup> US\$5m to nutrition and US\$15m 'shared'.

148. At the CO level there is a perceived dichotomy in the benefits of coordination. The main beneficiaries are perceived to be the other agencies participating in the coordination structures and WFP's own operations are seen to benefit much less. A recent internal survey of COs returned divided opinions on whether the HPC products inform and reflect WFP's operations – 23 percent saying yes, 39 percent somewhat and 32 percent no. Overall there was a strong perception that the transaction costs of coordination outweigh the benefits.<sup>46</sup>

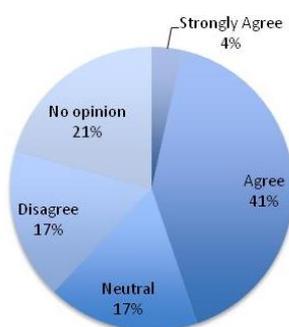
149. Within the countries visited there was an ambivalent attitude towards supporting clusters. Outside of major emergencies – when dedicated staff were deployed as cluster coordinators – there was an unwillingness to devote adequate senior staff time to this function. For example, in Mauritania the logistics cluster had been dissolved since September 2013 when the WFP consultant in charge of leading the cluster left the country. Fulfilling coordination responsibilities – HCT and clusters – was reported as an unwelcome distraction from their core responsibilities in the delivery of assistance by several WFP CDs.

**Finding 27:** PFs bring mixed benefits to cluster coordination mechanisms and other factors were cited as the primary reason for cluster participation and development.

150. Just under half of the CO survey respondents judged that the CERF had contributed to improved coordination and planning processes. In the case of CBPFs two respondents agreed, three were neutral and one had no opinion.

151. PFs were assumed to be an incentive to 'bring partners in' to cluster meetings, both in the survey as well as in the interviews in the case study countries – although rigorous evidence on this is lacking. The point was repeatedly made that 'money talks' and that attending cluster meetings offer members an increased chance of access to CBPFs. To a lesser extent the availability of CERF funding acts as an incentive for participation as the immediate benefits are restricted to United Nations agencies. The example was given in Ethiopia of a CERF UF allocation that forced agencies to sit together and analyze the situation, needs and causes.

**Figure 12: Has the CERF improved cluster coordination and planning processes?**



Source: CO Survey

152. The global evaluation of the food security cluster concluded that *"The food security coordination mechanisms that played a role in advising pooled funds benefitted from that activity ... an involvement in funding processes invigorates cluster processes. Through their link with the fund, cluster strategies and guidelines gain immediate operational relevance, and clusters can actively fill gaps they have identified"* (2014).

153. Several negative consequences for cluster coordination were encountered. The administrative burden of PF administration, particularly where a CHF is in place, was found to take time and resources away from operational coordination and problem-solving. The PF was not always seen as a suitable incentive for coordination as it could foster competition above collaboration. The clusters are not seen as a route to assured funding: several action plans developed

<sup>46</sup> WFP internal survey to COs administered by the WFP Emergency Preparedness Division, May 2014.

by clusters were ultimately poorly funded. The limited resources available compared to needs can result in large numbers of agencies being rejected and becoming somewhat disillusioned.

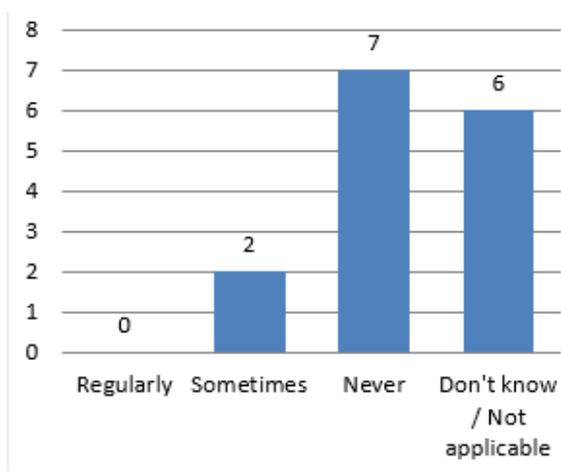
154. A large proportion of cluster members across Somalia, the Philippines and Mozambique consistently reported that other factors were stronger incentives for cluster participation. The key benefits included information sharing and 'insight into the bigger picture'. Other incentives included: the information sharing on on-going activities, strategic work plans, common assessments and standards.

155. As was pointed out in the Philippines, the clusters were working relatively well post Haiyan as a forum for coordination and planning due to a large augmentation of clusters with well-qualified staff. The CERF – or funding more generally – was not seen as a major explanatory factor in cluster performance in this case.

**Finding 28:** The PFs do not provide predictable support to meeting the staffing costs associated with operating the clusters.

156. WFP lacks predictable resources to finance its basic cluster coordination responsibilities. Nor are there clear arrangements for financing expanded coordination responsibilities during an escalating crisis. Cluster coordination costs were budgeted for in a mix of programmes. In some countries a dedicated SO was established to meet the costs of full-time coordinators. More usually, coordination functions were budgeted for under EMOPs, PRROs or other SOs.

**Figure 13: Use of PFs to finance cluster coordination costs**



Source: CO Survey

157. Policies and practices in relation to using PFs to support cluster operating costs were uneven. The Ethiopia ERF explicitly refused to fund cluster coordination costs. Several arguments were advanced to support this position: that agencies are obligated to meet coordination costs from core budgets under the IASC agreement, that it would detract from the funding of more urgent interventions, that it would encourage agencies already meeting these coordination costs to displace costs onto the CBPF, and that it would encourage the continued operation of poorly performing clusters.

158. The Somalia CHF considered requests for support to cluster costs on an ad hoc basis. In the last round of allocations the cost of a logistics cluster coordinator was funded until it was agreed that the cluster should be decommissioned due to lack of demand. In Sudan the last CHF round included a standard allocation of US\$100,000 per cluster to meet coordination costs. Where a cluster coordinator was already in place this money could be spent on cluster training activities.

159. The CO survey suggested that overall the CERF was rarely used to fund cluster coordination costs. Several administrative limitations were identified, including that the CERF limits the proportion of staff costs and also prohibits support to staff already in post.

### 2.3.3 Influence of PFs on WFP's relationship with its cooperating partners

**Finding 29:** PFs have not led to significant changes in the partnership between WFP and its cooperating partners in strategic planning processes.

160. WFP subscribes to the 2007 set of good partnership principles developed by the Global Humanitarian Platform.<sup>47</sup> These principles are: equality; transparency; result-oriented approach; responsibility; and complementarity (see Annex 13). This acknowledges diversity of responding agencies as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizes the interdependence among humanitarian organizations.

161. The development of PF proposals offers a platform for enhanced partnership between WFP and its cooperating partners (CPs). There is a clear instruction from the CERF secretariat that clusters and cooperating partners should be actively involved in CERF proposal development. This principle is being pushed in templates, guidance and training. This instruction was being followed to various degrees. The CBPFs provide a strong platform for collaborative planning. WFP's own internal guidance<sup>48</sup> stressed the need to display "evidence" that there was a consultative process amongst the agencies/ funds/ programmes.

162. In both the Philippines and Mozambique, NGOs have clearly been involved by WFP in the preparation stage. Nonetheless, it was felt by NGOs that the inputs requested were largely operational rather than strategic. In the case of the food security cluster, the CERF grants were understood to be a grant to WFP with NGOs in a service provision relationship with WFP.

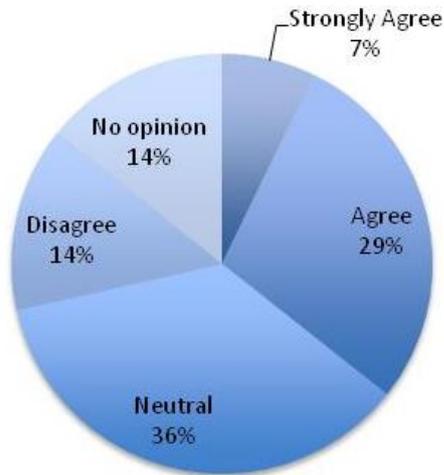
163. There were noticeable differences in the approach taken to CERF proposal development by the nutrition and camp management clusters, compared to the food security cluster. In the Philippines and Sudan, NGOs reported a more equal role in proposal formulation between the United Nations agencies – such as UNHCR and UNICEF – and NGO partners. Here the CERF was seen as a sector grant under the stewardship of a nominated United Nations agency, but with clear and transparent roles and funding for NGO partners.

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<sup>47</sup> See GHD. 2003. Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

<sup>48</sup> WFP. 2010h

**Figure 14: Has the CERF improved partnerships?**



Source: CO Survey

164. NGOs noted that their relationship with WFP depends heavily on the attitude of the WFP CD – as opposed to constraints imposed by the system *per se*. Some CDs were perceived as open to a participative dialogue whilst others continue to relate to NGOs as traditional implementing partners.

165. In a number of cases WFP is viewed by its partners as unable either to facilitate a strategic decision-making process or to opt for the best humanitarian response option, due to ineffective partnership relations. The example was given from the Sahel, where NGOs attempted to provide feedback to WFP around long-term livelihood interventions, cash assistance and other food security initiatives differing from the traditional food distribution. WFP in these West African countries, including Niger, Chad and Mali,

was not fully receptive to this message.<sup>49</sup>

166. Overall, a minority of COs judged that the PFs had served to improve WFP’s relationship with its CPs. This applied to both the CERF (see Figure 14) and the CBPFs – where only two out of six COs attributed an improvement to the use of PFs.

**Finding 30:** There is an increasing demand for information by OCHA on the pass through of PFs to implementing partners for the purposes of improved risk management (by CBPFs) and enhanced visibility of indirect PF contributions to NGOs (by CERF). However, WFP systems are not designed to allocate and report on the use of PFs at the grant level for specific cooperating partners.

167. OCHA have introduced a requirement to specify the role of cooperating partners in applications and reporting for several reasons. For the CBPFs in Somalia and Afghanistan this relates to increased risk aversion by donors and ensuring that CPs are approved as sub-grantees by OCHA.<sup>50</sup> For the CERF there is a desire to increase the transparency of how NGOs benefit from the use of the CERF and to demonstrate the proportion of funding channelled through them. For all PFs there is a growing interest in establishing greater visibility for the PF itself.

168. Within WFP systems it is not currently possible to link a specific grant (whether PF or directed multilateral) to sub-grants to specific cooperating partners. This information is only available at the level of the operation as a whole. Associated costs, including Field Level Agreements with NGOs, are allocated against available grants using an algorithm at the time when financial reports are compiled. Without fundamental changes in WFPs accounting systems it is extremely problematic for WFP to comply.

169. These demands are becoming increasingly problematic for WFP and hard to respond to. As a consequence this reporting requirement is inconsistently responded to. For example, of 13 PF reports examined for Ethiopia none included clear data on

<sup>49</sup> CARE et al., 2013

<sup>50</sup> As the vetting procedures of OCHA and WFP are not harmonized not all of WFP’s CPs may be automatically considered eligible by OCHA.

transfers to cooperating partners. The majority of reports indicated zero transfers or 'Not Applicable' in the relevant section. Others reported at the operation level or indicated that the entire grant amount was 'transferred' to partners.

170. There was minimal knowledge amongst NGOs on the source of funds provided by WFP to finance their activities. A very selective knowledge was gained when WFP requested assistance with visibility activities to meet the needs of a specific donor. This lack of knowledge minimized the ownership by the cluster/sector in a PF award. Even where CPs had been asked to participate in the preparation of a proposal they lacked awareness of the outcome of the application and were mostly not aware whether the funds they received were from a PF facility or another source.

**Finding 31:** A significant lag was reported between donor funds becoming available to WFP (including but not exclusively PFs) and the contracting of WFP's cooperating partners.

171. WFP formalises its collaboration with NGO cooperating partners through standard project-specific Field Level Agreements (FLAs), drawn up between and signed by the WFP Country Office and the NGO representation in the country. Following selection and the signature of the FLA, cooperating partners submit a request for an advance of 30 percent of the total amount of the agreement should they require funds to start activities. Subsequent payments to cooperating partners are made on the basis of invoices submitted.

172. Cooperating partners and donors raised concerns over the period of time taken to sign the FLAs and reimburse expenditure after the completion of activities. As WFP is unable to associate a specific grant with a specific cooperating partner the performance in passing through PFs cannot be distinguished from any other source of funds. However, this issue remains pertinent.

173. A CERF analysis<sup>51</sup> of narrative reports from WFP country office<sup>52</sup> s in 2012 found that it took an average of 42 working days from CERF disbursement to the first instalment reaching cooperating partners for rapid response grants, and 69 days for underfunded emergency grants. This analysis by the CERF secretariat also shows that WFP was better than the average compared to other United Nations agencies.

174. This was confirmed by examples seen in the field. While typhoon Haiyan made landfall on 8th November, the FLAs were only agreed between mid-December and mid-January. It is important to acknowledge that the start of WFP's overall field implementation is not predicated on having an FLA in place. Urgent distributions may be made through Government or directly by WFP. NGOs typically start immediate distributions using their own resources and using inputs that may be provided by WFP from its own stock of resources in expectation of an FLA signature. NGOs noted that the value added in terms of partnership with WFP was that WFP had food commodities available, rather than the FLA resources to support their distribution.

175. For NGOs the main complaint referred to delays in the reimbursement of expenditure rather than delays in signing the FLA. For smaller NGOs with a weaker cash flow slow payments were reported to be particularly problematic. WFP is contractually obligated to pay NGOs within 21 working days of NGOs' submission of invoices. A 2012 review of larger WFP Country Offices found that payments were made

<sup>51</sup> CERF. 2014. CERF Sub-grant to implementing partners. Final analysis of 2012 CERF grants. New York.

<sup>52</sup> The evaluation team were not able to extract data on this from the WINGS database and it is extremely difficult to link a PF grant to specific FLAs. It was not evident to the evaluators how the COs generated the data used for CERF reporting.

to NGOs an average of 16 days after submission of invoices. However, this does not reflect the considerable time taken in assembling the supporting documentation required by WFP before an invoice would be considered for payment.

## **2.4 Factors affecting WFP's use of PFs**

176. The final EQ asked "What are the main contributing/explanatory factors affecting WFP's effective and efficient use of the PFs?" The findings are presented in three sub-sections: (a) an examination of the transaction costs associated with the use of PFs; (b) the capacity to develop proposals and to monitor the use of funds; and (c) the ability to expend the funds within the prescribed time period.

### **2.4.1 Transaction costs**

**Finding 32:** PFs involved a redistribution of transaction costs away from donors, but the main justification is seen in improved quality of response.

177. Several of the donors acknowledged that a perceived advantage of PFs is the reduction in their own transaction costs. This was seen as particularly relevant in a context of reduced donor staffing. There are large efficiency savings in making a single consolidated transfer compared to following up numerous individual grants. Some demands are still made of donors at country level in the case of CBPFs, but the collective responsibility across all donors present in a country meant that this could be handled by the donors with more time on behalf of the others.

178. Donors stressed that the motivation to contribute to PFs was not primarily one of reducing their direct oversight responsibilities. PFs were seen as a means to increase the scope of their interventions to 'non-presence' countries through the CERF and to improve the quality and effectiveness by working as part of a coordinated system.

**Finding 33:** The additional transaction costs for WFP to access PFs were found to be 3 – 7.5 days of CO staff time – or an average cost of US\$4,700 per grant.

179. PFs use a project-based approach to the application and reporting processes and therefore do not fund against WFP's standard project operation documents and require a standalone proposal to be submitted. In addition, reporting is provided at the grant level rather than through WFP's Standard Project Report (SPR). This implies that the use of PFs is associated with higher transaction costs when compared to directed and undirected multilateral funding from donors willing to accept standard project documents.

180. The direct additional costs of using PFs were associated with several steps in the application and reporting processes: (i) consultation prior to drafting a proposal; (ii) drafting a proposal; (iii) negotiation and finalization of the proposal; (iv) technical monitoring and reporting; and (v) financial monitoring and reporting. Most of these tasks are the primary responsibility of the CO, although financial reports are finalized and submitted by HQ. In addition, time is spent by HQ on refinancing, that is identifying qualifying expenditures which can be booked against the PF grant in the instance of approaching deadlines.

**Table 9: Estimated transaction costs of recent PF Grants at CO level**

	<b>Somalia (CHF)</b>	<b>Philippines (CERF RR)</b>	<b>Ethiopia (CERF UF)</b>	<b>Ethiopia (ERF)</b>	<b>Moz (CERF)</b>	<b>Mauritania (CERF RR)</b>
<b>Initial consultation and coordination</b>	3 days	0.5 days	0.25 days	0.25 days	0.25 days	1.5 days
<b>Proposal drafting</b>	0.25 days	0.5 days	2.5 days	0.5 days	0.5 days	2 days
<b>Negotiation and finalization of the proposal</b>	1 day	0	0.5 days	0.25 days	0.25 days	1 day
<b>Monitoring and narrative reporting</b>	0.5 days	1.5 days	2 days	1 day	1 day	1 day
<b>Financial reporting</b>	0.5 days	1.5 days	1 day	1 day	2 days	1 day
<b>Total</b>	5.25 days	5 days	6.25 days	3 days	4 days	7.5 days
<b>Estimated cost<sup>53</sup></b>	US\$4,920	US\$3,840	US\$6,000	US\$3,360	US\$3,840	US\$7,200

Source: CO estimates and team analysis

181. A detailed review of the breakdown of the direct transaction costs at CO level provided a fairly consistent estimate of a total level of effort of between 3 – 7.5 staff days per grant.<sup>54</sup> The transaction costs for CERF and CBPF grants were reported to be of a similar order of magnitude, although CBPF grants may require more intensive coordination.

182. Based on an assumption that this work was carried out on average by a P3<sup>55</sup> this gives an average cost of US\$4,700 per grant, equivalent to a 0.25 percent overhead. For the 462 grants (to 217 operations) awarded to WFP this translates into an estimated cumulative cost of approximately US\$2 million over the 5 years.<sup>56</sup>

183. The conclusions from the larger sample of the CO survey were similar. These suggested a slightly larger average number of days required per grant and a slightly higher cost associated with accessing CBPFs compared to the CERF. However, higher

<sup>53</sup> Calculated at number of days multiplied by the cost recovery rate of a P3 in the field is taken as \$960 per day worked.

<sup>54</sup> In the Philippines, where coordination structures are replicated at regional level, this was seen to impose additional transaction costs.

<sup>55</sup> Detailed information was collected in each country on the actual job grades of those completing the tasks which supported this assumption, which ranged between a P5 and national staff grades.

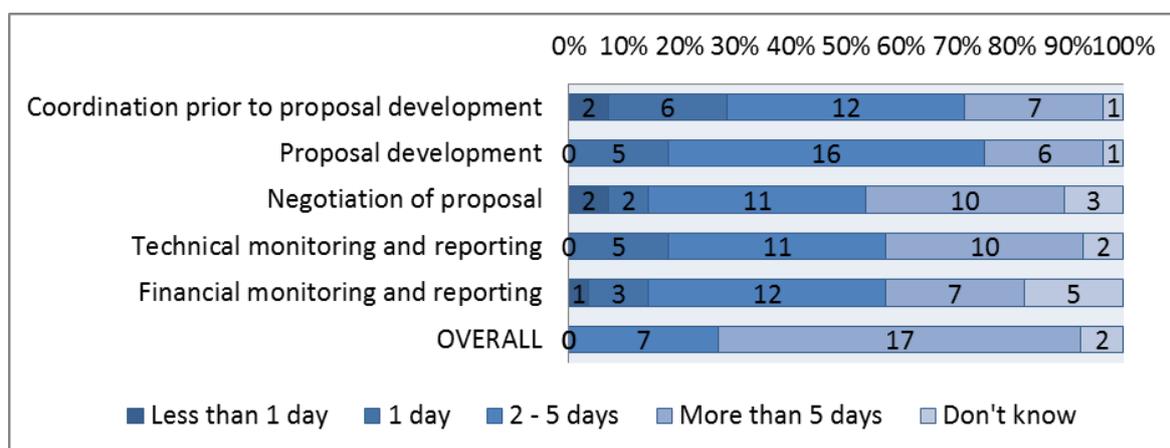
<sup>56</sup> This probably an overestimate – see footnote 57.

credibility is given to the transaction costs calculated in the field as it was possible to clarify the tasks that fell into the scope of the question.

184. It was noted that there is a high rate of success in applications to PFs that lowers the effective transaction costs. Proposals are discussed in advance and it was extremely rare for a formal proposal to be rejected and the associated time wasted. OCHA is seen as a facilitative and constructive administrative partner that helped to keep transaction costs down. OCHA’s presence also facilitated communication and information sharing, including on criteria for proposal development. Proposals and reports were not subject to heavy demands for clarification by PF managers.

185. WFP HQ is responsible for financial reporting on both CERF and CBPF grants. This was seen as a time-demanding process for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the short (6 months) duration of PF grants requires a significant manual intervention in matching eligible expenditures against the PF grants. Secondly, the financial reports were translated from WFP budget codes to United Nations Development Group budget codes – again a manual process.

**Figure 15: Estimated Transaction Costs for the CERF**



Source: CO Survey

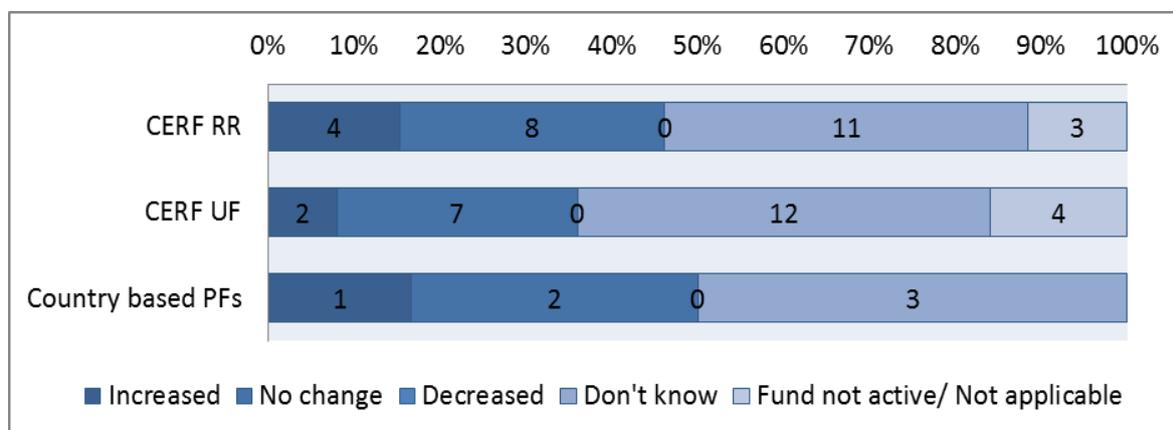
186. This additional reporting was reported to require 8 months of the time of a P3 staff member per year. The evaluation team calculated that this equated to a maximum additional cost of US\$3,200 per grant. The Contributions and Project Accounts Branch (RMFFC) made their own estimation of additional HQ reporting costs to inform a dialogue on the possible cost recovery. They concluded that the specific reporting requests from OCHA should be costed at US\$4,000 per report. It was noted that some contribution agreements come with periodic reporting requirements rather than one single financial report at the end of contract implementation and the costs are directly related to the number of reports required.

**Finding 34:** There is an indication that transaction costs fell as the PFs became established, but then increased again.

187. WFP staff reported factors that have both decreased and increased the transaction costs over time. The growing familiarity with the pooled fund processes has helped to reduce costs. Innovations such as a consolidated single final report and an online platform for reporting are both appreciated. However, overall there is a slight perception that transaction costs are increasing. The increased information requested on NGO partnerships in PF applications and reports has significant

consequences given the inflexibility of WFP systems. This may not have been fully appreciated when introduced by OCHA.

**Figure 16: Trends in Transaction Costs over Last 5 Years**



Source: CO Survey

**Finding 35:** The transaction costs were judged as reasonable compared to other donors, so long as the amount of the PF grant is of an acceptable minimum size.

188. All five of the COs visited rated the transaction costs of PFs relatively 'light' and 'reasonable' when compared to other donors. In practice, relatively few donors are fully satisfied by WFP's standard programme documents and there is a reported trend of increasing demands on WFP by donors. The DG ECHO reporting requirements are notorious and were estimated to take at least double the time of the PF processes. Even donors who accept 'standard' programme documents are increasingly looking outside of the established proposal and reporting cycle. DFID called on the Ethiopia and Somalia COs for "out of cycle" reports, which were extremely time-consuming to produce. USAID introduced an additional reporting requirement on the use of their cash contributions.

189. Other donors made other demands on WFP's time that were not associated with the use of PFs. Several donors were increasingly concerned with issues of visibility and demanded that WFP provide stories and pictures on the use of "their" funds. The Canadian requirement for all food purchased with their money to be labelled as such created considerable demands on WFP systems. Branding can be difficult and may result in delays, such as in Mauritania where stamping of bags cannot be done in country. Some donors ask for regular field monitoring visits and in the Philippines WFP had facilitated numerous high level Congressional field visits. All of these activities demand scarce senior management time.

190. As these costs are relatively fixed and do not vary with the size of the grant, the point was made that the transaction costs need to be judged in relation to the amount of money received. The general opinion of the COs was that the costs were acceptable for grants larger than a US\$500,000 threshold, although this judgment varied in line with the size of the overall operation. The current average grant size is US\$1.79 million with a median of US\$1 million. Of the 462 grants, 118 were lower than US\$0.5 million (i.e. 25 percent) and 52 were lower than US\$0.25 million.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> These figures need to be treated with caution. An unknown number of PF grants were entered as split grants in the WFP system

**Finding 36:** Significant transaction costs accrue from WFP's engagement with coordination structures and processes. However, WFP's access to PFs is not conditional on fulfilling these coordination responsibilities.

191. COs reported very substantial coordination costs involved in their participation in coordination structures including clusters and to a lesser extent HCT meetings. This often demands the participation of the CD, DCD or other senior staff. For some COs, such as Sudan, participation in these meetings (at a relatively senior level) was seen as cost for accessing PFs. However, at a corporate level coordination is viewed as a core responsibility, rather than as a means to funding. Viewed from this perspective the wider coordination costs were not directly associated with access to PFs.

192. WFP also participates in the overall administration of the CBPFs through membership of the boards responsible for awarding the funds. The CDs of both Somalia and Ethiopia had served on the respective boards, although in Somalia WFP had withdrawn from the board. This can be a significant responsibility – in Ethiopia there are 40 award meetings per year. This function is unconnected with WFP's direct access to CBPFs and was viewed by the evaluators as a contribution to humanitarian coordination.

#### **2.4.2 PF proposal development and reporting**

**Finding 37:** The formats for PF applications and reporting were found to be relatively straightforward, but the quality of PF applications and reports was found to be variable. The COs called on support from the RBs and HQ intermittently for strategic advice and quality control.

193. The PF application forms were found by COs to be simple to complete. The Mauritania CO observed that the CERF format was relatively light compared to other donor proposals.

194. Guidance and training is readily available from several sources including OCHA and WFP. In the CO survey 23 out of 30 countries had received guidance materials from at least one source. The process was observed to be well managed by OCHA (especially for the CBPFs) at a practical level, with guidance readily available on practical aspects of PF application and reporting.

195. WFP issued its own Internal CERF Guidelines and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the submission of CERF funding proposals in April 2013. The guidelines were a response to concerns raised by the CERF Secretariat. The guidelines clarify the preparation of CERF budget proposals in conformity with WFP's projects rates. The SOP explains WFP's internal clearance process to be followed by Country Offices when submitting funding proposals to CERF. It also provides contacts for further information in Rome and New York. No internal guidelines for the CBPFs were identified.

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for administrative reasons, resulting in some grant amounts appearing lower than they actually were.

**Table 10: Utility of PF Guidance Material**

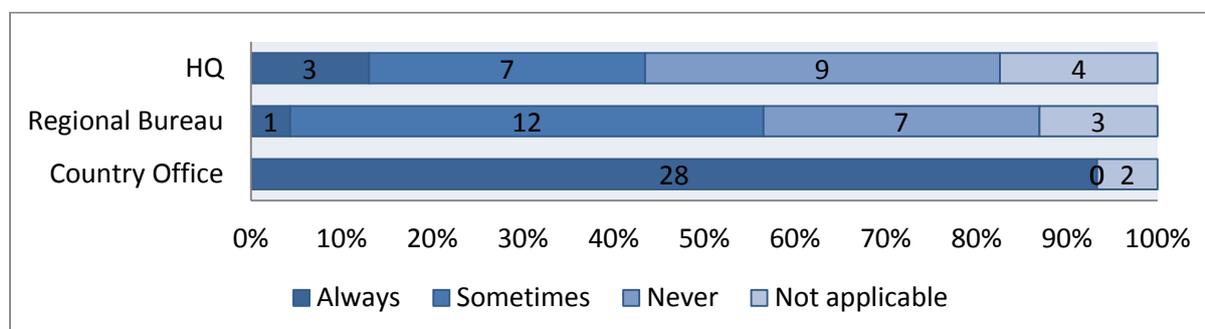
	WFP	PF Mgt Unit in-country	CERF Secretariat	Cluster	Other
<b>Very useful</b>	55%	44%	64%	67%	50%
<b>Moderately useful</b>	45%	44%	36%	33%	50%
<b>Not useful</b>	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%

Source: CO Survey

196. OCHA commented that the quality of WFP's submissions was highly variable. Proposals on occasion showed evidence of being hastily assembled. Reporting was often incomplete. Sections relating to the use of PFs by CPs were sometimes patchy. It was noted earlier that there appeared to be a weak correlation between the quality of the submission and access to funds. It was also noted that there appears to be little feed forward – reported past performance appears to have had little direct bearing on access to future grants.

197. WFP's internal CERF guidelines clearly give responsibility for developing and submitting proposals to COs – although this would be adapted in the case of an L3 emergency. All financial reporting on CERF contributions is currently centralized by Contribution and Project Accounts Branch (RMFFC) in HQ. The Regional Bureau and HQ have a role in providing support to the PF process, although it appears that this is only called on intermittently by the COs. None of the six COs visited had called on the RB, although the CO Survey suggested smaller COs were more likely to do so.

**Figure 17: Responsibility for PF Applications**



Source: CO Survey

198. Potentially the RB and HQ could have a role in quality assurance – but this not generally demanded by the COs. The WFP office in NY also assisted in direct communication with the CERF secretariat. For example, in the case of a CERF application for Guinea the WFP NY office reported that they liaised with the CERF Secretariat on how the application might be tweaked 'to make it more compatible'. However the role of the NY office in assisting direct communications with CERF secretariat has been limited in recent years, particularly since the position of a New York-located Donor Relations Officer was abolished in 2011.

**Finding 38:** There is a demand for targeted additional guidance and training in specific areas.

199. A majority of COs welcomed the idea of additional guidance and training across the proposal and reporting cycle, for all the PFs. The constant turn-over of staff in COs creates a requirement for refresher training of staff. In addition, specific challenges associated with the PFs were noted. The budget breakdown – which uses UNDP cost categories – can be problematic and time-consuming, especially at reporting phase. Consequently some COs saw these being returned 2 or 3 times for clarification (Mozambique, Mauritania). Further guidance on CERF budget preparation and reporting was seen as helpful.

**Table 11: Additional training requested by COs**

<b>PF monitoring</b>	13
<b>PF proposal development</b>	17
<b>PF reporting</b>	15
<b>Offices requiring at least one of the above</b>	21
<b>Offices requiring 2 or more of the above</b>	15
<b>Offices requiring all 3 of the above</b>	9

Source: CO Survey

200. A further need for training had been identified by the CERF Secretariat at the strategic level, working with senior managers on the strategic allocation of PFs. Based on a training assessment, a revised training was piloted in the Philippines in June 2014. The lack of adequate guidance and training on a range of strategic issues was noted by stakeholders including in relation to clarity on the activation of the CERF RR outside of an L3 declaration, the appropriate use of the CERF UF and the criteria for allocation between sectors to adhere to ‘life-saving’ criteria.

### 2.4.3 Project extensions and return of funds

**Finding 39:** Despite a short window for eligible PF expenditure WFP has been able to expend the majority of funds with only an occasional need to seek grant extensions.

201. For grants from the CERF rapid response window, funds must be expended and activities completed within six months from the date of disbursement to the agency Headquarters. For grants from the underfunded window, funds must be expended by 31 December (same year) / 30 June (following year) for grants disbursed during the first/ second round respectively.

202. Project extensions are usually not allowed except in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if the reasons for the inability to implement are clearly documented to be outside of the control of the recipient agency. Compelling reasons for project extensions include, but are not limited to: unforeseen and increased access restrictions; unforeseen changes in government policy; and a fundamental change in the socio-political climate underpinning the application for CERF funds.

203. Given the extended timelines involved in the international procurement and transportation of food, working to these strict timelines can be challenging for WFP. However, WFP has resorted to project extensions relatively infrequently. In a sample

of 50 PF grants there were only two confirmed extensions and four possible cases.<sup>58</sup> An even smaller proportion of cases involved the return of funds. Out of US\$678 million in CERF grants, US\$3.5 million or 0.05 percent of funds, were returned. The efficiency of fund utilization comes at a cost. This requires extensive staff time used to identify suitable qualifying expenditures which can be booked against the PFs.

204. In some specific cases localized challenges were noted. In Ethiopia the ERF was used to fund a CSB+ pipeline through a trust fund arrangement. No internal advances are permitted under WFP rules for trust funds. As international procurement was required for this commodity project, extensions have been required.

205. In the case of Mauritania internal advances were taken on the assumption that they would be revolved by the CERF. However, delays in the CERF proposal submission have meant that the six-week retroactivity for invoices has been insufficient and initial expenditures were no longer eligible.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 3.1 Overall Conclusions

206. This section presents the Conclusions emerging from the evaluation findings and analysis presented in the previous section. Annex 14 charts the links between the conclusions and respective findings.

**Conclusion 1:** PFs have made a positive contribution to WFP operations. The main added value of PFs comes from their relative timeliness, predictability and additionality. However, there is scope to further improve aspects of timeliness and predictability.

207. There was an initial uncertainty on the consequences of the introduction of the PFs for WFP. However, it is evident that WFP has come to accept PFs as a positive addition to the overall humanitarian funding arrangements. No voices were heard during the course of the evaluation arguing against the continuation of the PFs.

208. The CERF RR was seen to facilitate a rapid response, and the CBPFs provided smaller scale strategic contributions to WFP operations. However, the contribution of the CERF UF to WFP's capacity to respond to underfunded emergencies was less clear.

209. The financial flows from PFs to WFP have been relatively modest, especially when judged against the scale of WFP's operational needs. In this context the value of PFs is often judged by their strategic contribution. WFP has capitalized on PF attributes to address specific funding needs. As one respondent said, PFs have become one useful "piece of the overall funding jigsaw".

210. PFs are generally available faster than other directed multilateral donor funds. At the same time it was noted that there is scope to further improve the timeliness of PF allocations and this is likely to be achieved by bringing greater discipline to the HC/HCT process.

211. The predictability of PF availability in response to unforeseen crises is an important factor. This has been enhanced in the case of L3 corporate emergencies with

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<sup>58</sup> It proved difficult for some grants to distinguish between temporary extensions (an accounting mechanism to allow expenditures to be booked to a 'closed' grant) and permanent extensions approved by the donor. The information on WINGS is often not clear or missing. Attachments/notes that would clarify are not always there on WINGS or do not provide clear information.

the adoption of relevant protocols. However, the predictability of PFs could be improved in many other situations including sub-L3 response emergencies, underfunded emergencies and the funding of common services and cluster coordination costs.

212. PFs are also often seen as additional to other sources of finance. There was a fear that the establishment of PFs would impact negatively on WFP's income streams. However, this has not been realized and PFs may even serve to funnel additional funds to WFP. Given the context of chronic operational underfunding, PFs have proved a welcome addition in this respect.

**Conclusion 2:** From a WFP perspective there are strong arguments that favour retaining a clear focus on 'life-saving' criteria in PFs. Funding of associated areas of preparedness, resilience building and social assistance would be better met through complementary funding instruments, rather than diluting the focus of PFs.

213. There is a continual debate on the strategic orientation of PFs – principally the degree to which they should focus on life-saving criteria. This was witnessed both in discussions of what qualifies as life-saving in relation to the use of the CERF and a structural debate on formally broadening the objectives of CBPFs. Based on the evaluation findings there are strong arguments for maintaining a clear 'life-saving' objective.

214. The available PFs are already overstretched in addressing critical needs. Assuming the appeal figures are taken as credible, there is still a need to substantially increase funding to close the gap on emergency, life-saving response. This conclusion applies on a system-wide perspective – not just a narrow WFP concern. Therefore, expanding the scope of the PFs, in the absence of a corresponding reinforcement of funds, would inevitably further dilute their impact.

215. The structure and management of PFs does not exhibit a comparative advantage to addressing a wider set of objectives. Specifically, the short duration and fluctuations in availability of funds (for CBPFs) do not align well with the multi-year, predictable support required to fund a wider set of interventions. A range of complementary funding needs are evident in WFP, but these could be better met through other, more appropriate sources.

**Conclusion 3:** The CERF and CBPFs were observed to work effectively in synergy at the country level, with each fund having distinct and complementary objectives and modalities.

216. The evaluation concluded that, from a WFP perspective, the CBPFs and CERF complemented each other relatively effectively. The respective PFs have developed complementary objectives and partnerships. WFP looks mainly towards the CERF, while the CBPFs are used principally to support common services, with occasional grants to discrete and smaller-scale interventions.

217. This diversity of funding instruments has an apparent value, especially in the differential access it affords across the range of humanitarian response agencies. The CERF affords United Nations agencies privileged access and in return WFP recognizes the importance of CBPFs to CP operations and is careful in the extent to which it competes for these funds.

218. It is important to ensure that the evolution of these instruments continues to service the diverse needs of all stakeholders. Consequently, the harmonization of the

prioritization processes is desirable but should reflect the very different needs and capacities of the beneficiary agencies.

**Conclusion 4:** PFs play a useful complementary role in supporting the deployment of internal advances.

219. The evaluation found that WFP's need for rapid financing is primarily met through internal advances. In the case of a rapid onset emergency the COs would invariably make a first call on internal advances prior to negotiations on the use of PFs. Internal financing mechanisms offer WFP managers advantages of greater timeliness, volume and flexibility than PFs. PFs will inevitably be considerably slower to mobilize than internal funds, although generally still faster than other directed multilateral funds and lighter in terms of application procedures.

220. PFs have an important role in supporting the mobilization of internal advances to initiate a response through providing collateral. PFs have less restrictions on their use as collateral than many of the PF donors individually impose. The predictability of PF releases is a key characteristic in determining its relevance as collateral – just as much as its timeliness. Confidence in the future availability of this source of funding can be translated into earlier and larger advances.

**Conclusion 5:** The PFs are well matched to funding common services operated by WFP on behalf of the humanitarian community. However, PF support to common services is uncertain, especially for on-going operational costs as opposed to start-up costs.

221. The findings of the evaluation reaffirmed the importance of PFs as a source of funding for WFP-operated common services. There is a strong common interest in using PFs, both CBPFs and the CERF, for this purpose. This is clearest in the case of funding the start-up of these services – as seen in the example of the CERF RR policy clarifying support to UNHAS.

222. However, securing on-going funding for these services remains a challenge. A pattern was observed where PFs, both CBPFs and the CERF, were reluctant to commit to providing annual funding. However, in the absence of sufficient alternative donors and the threat of closure, PFs were regularly obliged to act as the donor of last resort. This funding pattern creates both uncertainty and inefficiencies as WFP is forced to work through short-term sub-contracts. It is also inconsistent with the expectation of several CBPF donors that the fund serves to provide 'their' contribution to these services and releases them from an obligation to make additional directed contributions.

**Conclusion 6:** Reconciling WFP's large-scale operations and the project funding model of PFs remains challenging. Earmarking of activities within WFP operations by the PF for adds transaction costs, constrains the flexibility of response and does little to improve the quality of the response.

223. The major challenge in the use of PFs remains reconciling the differing perspectives between WFP and PF managers. WFP utilizes a limited number of standard operations (EMOPs, PRROs and SOs) to plan, deliver and report on assistance at country level. Using a quasi programmatic approach of large-scale operations offers advantages of consistency in the approach used, transparency on the coverage of aggregate needs and significant efficiencies in management costs.

224. In contrast, the PFs have adopted a 'project-based' approach. PFs are not structured to make unearmarked contributions to WFP's overall operations and seek transparency in the use of the specific contribution. This is reflected in bespoke project application, monitoring and reporting processes. This is driven by the requirement to be accountable for the use of funds to donors and the principle of targeted funding to the highest priority activities. Reconciling these approaches continues to be challenging. The 'additional' transaction costs associated with the use of PFs have been criticized by PF recipients and the effectiveness of prioritized funding is questionable given the overall fungibility of donor financing of WFP programmes.

225. There appears to be little alternative to a compromise which, as far as possible, meets the needs of both sides. The evaluators concluded that this should be based on an acknowledgement that WFP's operational approach offers efficiency and effectiveness gains – whilst at the same time WFP must assist OCHA to discharge its responsibilities to donors.

**Conclusion 7:** WFP has engaged more deeply with coordinated strategy development and project appraisal mechanisms in order to access PFs. However, this has not generally resulted in observable changes in the strategic or operational approach.

226. The use of PFs has been closely associated with the move to a harmonized and coordinated planning process. Accessing the PFs is intimately associated with the Humanitarian Programming Cycle (HPC) – although it is expected that WFP will participate with the HPC even in the absence of PFs. There is evidence that WFP's PF applications are consistent with the results of common assessments and the SRPs.

227. However, evidence of impact of the coordination processes on the design of programmes is hard to discern. Although the evaluation was not able to gather evidence on this it is logical to assume that this has led to improved coordination of interventions between agencies and the coverage of needs within the sector. However, there has been comparatively little change in the substance of WFP programmes – for example, through the introduction of new modalities of integrated programming or the nature of WFP's engagement with its CPs. Where change had occurred, such as the introduction of cash and vouchers, it was not generally prompted by the use of PFs.

**Conclusion 8:** The characteristics of PFs mean that they have had a mixed impact as a tool to promote coordination across the humanitarian system. PFs work best in reinforcing effective coordination structures, rather than solving the challenges of weak or absent systems.

228. The contribution of PFs to reinforcing coordination and leadership is not clear-cut. PFs have helped to incentivize wider participation in coordination processes. They can also be a useful tool for helping to implement the vision of the HC and clusters. At the same time, the interest of stakeholders in strategic coordination is motivated by far more than the possibility of accessing PF grants. There are wider questions over whether PFs are an appropriate incentive for coordination, or whether this undermines motivation for collaboration and competition.

229. WFP has not fully capitalized on the potential of PFs to discharge its responsibilities for leadership of, and participation in, the various humanitarian coordination structures. In part this is because WFP itself has yet to demonstrate clear commitment to these processes at field level. It is concluded that PFs can positively reinforce the functioning of clusters and the HC/HCT, especially where these are

competently managed. However, PFs in themselves have not been an effective solution to a lack of coordination or weak leadership.

**Conclusion 9:** PFs have limited comparative advantage in financing cluster coordination costs – including staff salaries – and at best play a supplementary role.

230. Previous evaluations indicate that the question of whether PFs should be used to finance coordination costs is a long-running debate. This evaluation found that in practice the PFs have only provided limited direct support to cluster coordination costs. Support was only provided on an exceptional, ad hoc basis. The evaluation also found that WFP lacked predictable resources to fulfil its coordination responsibilities. This applied across all the clusters for which WFP has a leadership (or co-leadership) responsibility.

231. PFs do have an advantage in supplementing financing of coordination costs, such as in the case of large-scale emergencies where PFs can be used to further reinforce coordination structures. However, the conclusion drawn by the evaluation was that the PFs generally lack a comparative advantage in funding *core* coordination costs. Coordination is understood to be an on-going responsibility and not a function that only requires attention in an emergency. The question of how routine operational costs should be funded remains open and outside of the scope of the evaluation.

**Conclusion 10:** There is a need for more clearly defined framework that defines the responsibility for the management of PF processes in WFP. The human resource provision, guidance and training of staff should also be strengthened.

232. WFP could benefit from more clearly defined responsibilities and leadership of PF processes within WFP. Currently responsibilities are fragmented and responsibility for strategic leadership on the use of PFs is poorly defined. This is evidenced by the disconnect between the responsibility for narrative and financial reporting. It is also witnessed in the continuing ambiguity in the respective roles, responsibilities and linkages between the COs, RBs and HQ.

233. It is evident that common approaches in how COs use PFs have emerged relatively spontaneously over time – rather than being driven through a central strategy. However, these approaches are generally in accordance with both corporate needs and the PF objectives. Funding has gravitated to most appropriate uses. For example, PFs have found a particular role in supporting common services or in supporting smaller-scale activities such as nutrition or cash transfers with EMOPs and PRROs.

234. The lack of a clear and simple practical guidance material means CO staff lack a reference point in developing PF applications. This is relevant given the frequent staff turn-over in field-based positions. There is also a consequent degree of ambiguity in the approach to the use of the CERF UF window that would benefit from a clearer corporate position. The quality of PF proposals and reports is inconsistent and internal standards and responsibilities for quality control are unclear. This includes a lack of clarity of the role of RBs and HQs in supporting the PF application and reporting processes.

235. There has been some training of staff in PF proposal development and reporting. COs identified a need for additional training to cover both the mechanistic aspects of the applications and reports and also a better defined common strategic approach to the utilization of PFs. The need for general training is generally well

supported through OCHA. However, this should be complemented by additional training that situates the use of PFs within a corporate resourcing strategy.

**Conclusion 11:** Several aspects of the monitoring arrangements for PFs are weak or inappropriate. The increasing emphasis on providing disaggregated reports on the use of PFs at project level is demanding and adds little value. Equally there is insufficient attention to assess the contribution of PFs to the broader goals of improved timeliness of response or the institutionalization of the humanitarian reforms.

236. The focus on tracking and teasing out the direct impact of PF contributions to WFP operations is both problematic and of limited value. It is questionable that it is either feasible or useful to tease out the specific use of PFs within the wider operations. Reporting on operation level impacts may be both more practical and relevant. Whilst the apparent demand for this level of detail comes in reporting to donors, it is not clear that donors in fact demand this.

237. The requirement to report on 'pass-through' to CPs raises specific problems. This demonstrates the incompatibility of WFP's monitoring systems with the PFs' demand for greater accountability at the grant level. The conclusion drawn by the evaluation is that accommodating this request would require not only a substantial reengineering of WFP's management information systems, but also a significant loss of flexibility and efficiency. What constitutes 'reasonable' reporting requirements – including reporting on transfers to CPs – still needs clarification and agreement.

238. Limited attention to contextual monitoring limits the understanding of the real impacts of PFs. Critically there is no systematic attempt to monitor the overall timeliness in mobilizing WFP's response to emergencies, which would provide a framework for understanding the relevance of PFs to this objective. Finally, the current monitoring does little to improve the understanding the contribution of PFs to promoting the transformative agenda. Milestones or indicators to track the specific contribution of the PFs to the roll-out of the humanitarian reforms have not been developed. This leaves the pathways through which the PFs act poorly understood – let alone measured.

### 3.2 Lessons Learnt

239. The following key lessons have been identified, which should be taken into account in the future use of PFs:

- PFs are only one part of the solution to ensuring a rapid humanitarian response. The capacity of WFP to deliver a timely response depends on far more than the timely availability of money. and is associated with a range of preparedness measures including: having an established WFP Office in country; an understanding of local hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities; the ability to rapidly surge well-qualified and experienced staff to bolster capacity for assessment, planning and implementation; well-functioning coordination mechanisms; the speed at which commodities can be procured; and the speed at which cooperating partners are able to commence distributions on behalf of WFP.
- Countries with stronger leadership and coordination structures are able to make more effective use of PF, in particular by avoiding the pitfalls of 'entitlement' based allocation procedures. WFP could benefit from more consistent investment and participation in coordination mechanisms (clusters,

other sectoral coordination bodies and the HCT) and partnership processes. At the system level continued attention to strengthened leadership is important and in particular the role and functioning of the HCT.

- There is a fair degree of consistency in the added value of specific PFs/ PF windows to funding specific categories of WFP activities. However, the best use of PFs will always be influenced by the local context – including the amount of PF funding available compared to other financing sources. Therefore any corporate criteria need to allow sufficient flexibility for the COs to adapt the use of the PFs to the local context.
- PFs are relatively flexible and risk tolerant forms of financing. As such they have the potential to support innovative intervention modes and arrangements. Only limited use has been made of PFs for this purpose and could be explored further in future. In particular they may be considered as a means to expand and pilot other common services.
- Monitoring of humanitarian action and feedback to the decision making process is critical to improve processes and procedures, and to guide decisions around priorities. Sustained donor involvement and commitment to PF will require stronger efforts to provide evidence of results and impact. However, interpreting this as closer scrutiny at the project level will increase transaction costs and will be counterproductive to efficiency. More evidence is needed of the impact at the sector level and on humanitarian processes.

### 3.3 Recommendations

All of the recommendations given below are directed at WFP. The scope and management of the evaluation dictate this limitation. However, many of the issues identified implicitly require the attention of the PF managers and donors, who are encouraged to further consider these recommendations.

Recommendation and associated actions	Responsibility
<p><b>1. Maintain and strengthen the life-saving focus of PFs</b></p> <p>Based on Conclusion 2 that the PFs provide inadequate funds to meet their core life-saving responsibility and comparative disadvantage in supporting preparedness, resilience building and social welfare programmes; and on Conclusion 11 on the weaknesses of current monitoring arrangements.</p>	
<p>1(a) Advocate with donors on maintaining a focus on life-saving across all PFs.</p>	<p>PG + Geneva + NY</p>
<p>1(b) Advocate with PF managers on establishing a compliance and monitoring mechanism to ensure that the life-saving criteria are respected in the HC/HPC prioritization process.</p>	<p>PGG + NY</p>
<p>1(c) Advocate for a significant financial augmentation of the CERF RR window to enable it to contribute more</p>	<p>PG + Geneva + NY</p>

Recommendation and associated actions	Responsibility
effectively and at appropriate scale to the core needs of affected populations.	
<p><b>2. Reduce the earmarking of grants from pooled funds</b></p> <p>Based on the conclusion that earmarking adds transaction costs, constrains flexibility and does little to improve quality.</p>	
2 (a) Advocate for enhancing the flexibility of pooled funds by aligning grant contributions with WFP operations, rather than project-level activities.	PG + Geneva + NY
<p><b>3. Clarify the criteria for using grants from the CERF UF Window</b></p> <p>Based on Conclusion 1 that there is scope to further improve aspects of predictability and Finding 10 that the PFs did not make a strategic contribution to WFP's ability to respond to urgent needs in underfunded emergencies.</p>	
3 (b) Advocate with PF managers on clarifying the criteria for making allocations from the CERF UF window to forgotten crises.	PGG + Office of the DED/COO
3 (a) Review and adapt the criteria used by WFP to identify Under Funded emergencies to prioritize crises that are both underfunded (as opposed to experiencing temporary cash flow difficulties) and emergencies (as opposed to operations that address chronic poverty).	PGG + Office of the DED/COO
<p><b>4. Increase the capacity of WFP to utilize PFs as collateral for the release of internal advances</b></p> <p>Based on Conclusion 1 that there is significant scope to improve perform timeliness, flexibility and predictability in the use of PFs and Conclusion 4 that PFs play a useful complementary role in supporting the deployment of internal advances.</p>	
4 (a) Building on existing mechanisms, increase the risk appetite for using advance funds by using early forecasting of CERF contributions as a basis for releases. Consider the use of generic forecasts and broader collateral, rather than firm forecasts of specific grants.	PGG + RMB
4 (b) Support the establishment of clear definitions and protocols for activation of the CERF RR facility in L2 and L1 emergencies, and advocate for their system-wide introduction.	

Recommendation and associated actions	Responsibility
<p><b>5. Enhance the contribution of PFs to the operation of common services in emergencies</b></p>	
<p>Based on Conclusion 5 that PFs are well matched to funding common services operated by WFP on behalf of the humanitarian community. However, PF support to common services is uncertain, especially for on-going operational costs as opposed to start-up costs.</p>	
<p>5 (a) Advocate with IASC principals for an Inter- Agency review of funding of common services through all PFs (CERF and CBPFs)</p>	<p>GEN</p>
<p>5 (b) Advocate with the CERF Secretariat to: i) develop inclusive guidelines on the use of the CERF RR facility in financing all common services (not just UNHAS), including financing of cluster coordination costs; and ii) to specify the use of L3 CERF RR activation in financing the start-up of common services.</p>	<p>Common Services, OME      Logistic</p>
<p><b>6. Consolidate fulfilment of WFP's coordination responsibilities to improve support for the effective use of PFs.</b></p>	
<p>Based on Conclusion 8 that PFs work best in reinforcing effective coordination structures, rather than solving the challenges of weak or absent systems and Conclusion 9 that PFs have limited comparative advantage in financing cluster coordination costs – including staff salaries – and at best play a supplementary role.</p>	
<p>6 (a) Clarify corporate position and expectations regarding CO responsibilities for cluster/sector coordination (where WFP is the lead/co-lead) including performance targets and accountability arrangements.</p>	<p>Office of the DED/COO</p>
<p>6 (b) Ensure that the indicator on cluster performance included in the 2014-17 WFP Management Results Framework are incorporated into relevant Country Office's performance plans, monitored and reported on at the corporate level at appropriate times.</p>	<p>RMP</p>

Recommendation and associated actions	Responsibility
<p><b>7. Define strategic and operational responsibilities for acquiring and reporting on the use of PF at all levels.</b></p> <p>Based on Conclusion 10 that there is a need for more clearly defined management framework to additional guidance, training and define responsibility for support to the management of WFP staff tasked with responsibility for PF processes in WFP. The human resource provision, guidance and training for staff should also be strengthened.</p>	
<p>7 (a) Define the respective roles and responsibilities of HQ units, RB and COs in managing PF processes to enhance the credibility of and accountability for the application process.</p>	<p>PGG</p>
<p>7 (b) Develop and implement a training package suitable for both online and face to face delivery</p>	<p>PGG</p>
<p><b>8. Enhance the quality, efficiency and utility of monitoring and reporting on the use of PFs.</b></p> <p>Based on Conclusion 11 that several aspects of the monitoring arrangements are weak or inappropriate. The increasing emphasis on providing disaggregated reports on the use of PFs at beneficiary level is demanding and adds little value. Equally there is insufficient attention to assess the contribution of PFs to the broader goals of improved timeliness of response or the institutionalization of the humanitarian reforms and Conclusion 6 that reconciling WFP's large-scale operations and the project funding model of PFs remains challenging.</p>	
<p>8 (a) Negotiate limiting the content of narrative and financial reports to information that is necessary for the management of PFs and that justifies the additional transaction costs.</p>	<p>RMP + RMF</p>
<p>8 (b) Review WFP Standard Project Reports (SPRs) to assess whether they could be aligned with a revised reporting format for PFs ,and generally be considered 'fit for purpose' by donors.</p>	<p>RMP+RMF</p>
<p>8 (c) Systematically apply the relevant corporate Key Performance Indicators from WFP's Management Results Framework to track the response time for sudden-onset emergencies and report on performance through the Annual Performance Report. Performance on the</p>	<p>RMP</p>

Recommendation and associated actions	Responsibility
specific indicators should be analysed in depth, including by breaking down processes in sub-steps when relevant.	
8 (d) Advocate with OCHA for the clarification, monitoring and reporting of all steps (ie not just the CERF Secretariat responsibilities) taken to release CERF RR grants, including the processes under the jurisdiction of the HC/HCT.	PGG + NY

## Acronyms

AA	Administrative Agent
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Government of Germany)
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CP	Cooperating Partner
CBPF	Country-based Pooled Fund
CCS	Country Case Studies
CD	Country Director
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Funds
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CO	WFP Country Office
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
DCD	Deputy Country Director
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EB	Executive Board (WFP)
EM	Evaluation Manager
EMOP	Emergency Operation
EQs	Evaluation Questions
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ER	Evaluation Report

ERF	Emergency Response Funds
FA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Funding Coordination Section (OCHA)
FLA	Field Level Agreement
FPF	Forward Purchasing Facility
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GFD	General Food Distributions
GFSC	Global Food Security Cluster
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HPC	Humanitarian Programming Cycle
HRF	Humanitarian Response Fund
HQ	WFP Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INGO	International Non-Government Agency
IR	Inception Report
IRA	Immediate Response Account
ISC	Indirect Support Costs
KfW	German Development Bank
L3	Level 3
LIC	Low income country

LOU	Letter of Understanding
MA	Managing Agent
MIC	Middle Income Country
MPTF	Multi Partner Trust Fund
MT	metric tonnes
NCE	No cost extension
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEV	WFP Office of Evaluation
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services (United Nations)
PAF	Performance and Accountability Framework
PF	Pooled Fund
PREP	Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
QA	Quality Assurance
RB	WFP Regional Bureau
RC	Resident Coordinator
RR	Rapid Response (CERF window)
SC	Steering Committee
SCG	Sectoral Coordination Group
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SEQs	Sub Evaluation Questions
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SO	Special Operation
SPR	Standard Project Report
SRP	Strategic Response Plan

TA	Transformative Agenda
TDC	Terminal disbursement date
TL	(Evaluation) Team Leader
TOC	Terminal obligation date
TOR	Terms of reference
UF	Under Funded Emergencies (CERF window)
UG	User Group
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WCF	Working Capital Financing
WCS	Weekly Contribution Statistics
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations
WINGS II	WFP Information Network and Global System II

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**Rome, December, 2014, OEV/2014/01**

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