

CHAPTER ONE: THE CLUSTER APPROACH

1.1 GLOBAL CLUSTER GUIDANCE NOTE – KEY POINTS

The text in Section 1.1 and 1.2 has been reduced from the IASC Global Cluster Guidance Note of 24 November 2006 and IASC Operational Guidance on Designating Sector/Cluster Leads in New/Ongoing Emergencies (draft) and which can be found in its entirety in the Guidelines Annex.

Introduction

- The "cluster approach" is intended as a mechanism that can help to address identified gaps in response and enhance the quality of humanitarian action. It is part of a wider reform process aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability and accountability, while at the same time strengthening partnerships.
- The success of the cluster approach will be judged in terms of the impact it has on improving the humanitarian response to those affected by crises.

Aim and Scope

- At the global level, the aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by ensuring that there is predictable leadership and accountability in all the main sectors or areas of humanitarian response.
- Similarly, in countries with Humanitarian Coordinators, the aim is to strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity.
- It is about achieving more strategic responses and better prioritization of available resources by clarifying the division of labour among organizations, better defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations within the sectors, and providing the Humanitarian Coordinator with both a first point of call and a provider of last resort in all the key sectors or areas of activity.

Leadership – Emergency Shelter Cluster

- Global level
 - UNHCR and IFRC co-chair the Emergency Shelter Cluster at the Global level.
- Country level
 - UNHCR is the lead for the Emergency Shelter Cluster for IDPs from conflict.
 - IFRC has made a commitment to provide leadership to the broader humanitarian community in Emergency Shelter in disaster situations, to consolidate best practice, map capacity and gaps, and lead coordinated response. IFRC has committed to being a 'convener' rather than a 'cluster lead'. In an MOU between IFRC and OCHA it was agreed that IFRC would not accept accountability obligations beyond those defined in its Constitutions and own policies and that its responsibilities would leave no room for open-ended or unlimited obligations. It has therefore not committed to being 'provider of last resort' nor is it accountable to any part of the UN system. IFRC will do its utmost to ensure that the responsibilities listed in the next Section are carried out and that the Humanitarian Coordinator is fully aware of all aspects of the emergency shelter activities.
 - Other agencies might be designated cluster leads on the national level based on agreement within the IASC country team.
- Funding
 - UNHCR coordinates the 2007 Cluster Appeal for the Emergency Shelter Cluster.
 - IFRC does not participate in Consolidated Appeals launched by the UN and will appeal separately for support in providing leadership and strengthening capacity for the provision of emergency shelter in disasters resulting from natural hazards.
- ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has stated that its position on the cluster approach is the following: "Among the components of the Movement, the ICRC is not taking part in the cluster approach. Nevertheless, coordination between the ICRC and the UN will continue to the extent necessary to achieve efficient operational complementarity and a strengthened response for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence."

Sector leadership at the country level

- Definitions
 - A “cluster” is essentially a “sectoral group” and there should be no differentiation between the two in terms of their objectives and activities; the aim of filling gaps and ensuring adequate preparedness and response should be the same.
 - A “cluster lead” is an agency/organization that formally commits to take on a leadership role within the international humanitarian community in a particular sector/area of activity, to ensure adequate response and high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership.
 - A “sector/cluster coordinator” is an individual with the necessary seniority, facilitation skills and expertise appointed by the cluster lead to coordinate the sector/cluster, full or part time.
- It should be left to Humanitarian Country Teams to decide on a case-by-case basis on appropriate terminology for the country in question. To ensure coherence, standard terminology should be used within each country and similar standards should be applied to all the key sectors or areas of humanitarian activity.
- In some cases it may be appropriate for NGOs or other humanitarian partners to act as sector focal points in parts of the country where they have a comparative advantage or where the cluster lead has no presence.
- Sectoral groups at the country level should treat the global level clusters as a resource that can be called upon for advice on global standards, policies and ‘best practice’, as well as for general guidance and training programmes. There is no direct reporting line, however, between sectoral groups at the country level and global level clusters.
- The role of sector leads at the country level is to facilitate a process aimed at ensuring well-coordinated and effective humanitarian responses in the sector or area of activity concerned. Sector leads themselves are not expected to carry out all the necessary activities within the sector or area of activity concerned. They are required, however, to commit to being the ‘provider of last resort’ where this is necessary and where access, security and availability of resources make this possible.
- Specific responsibilities of sector leads at the country level include ensuring the following:
 - Inclusion of key humanitarian partners
 - Establishment and maintenance of appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms
 - Coordination with national/local authorities, State institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors
 - Participatory and community-based approaches
 - Attention to priority cross-cutting issues (e.g. age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights)
 - Needs assessment and analysis
 - Emergency preparedness
 - Planning and strategy development
 - Application of standards
 - Monitoring and reporting
 - Advocacy and resource mobilization
 - Training and capacity building
 - Provision of assistance or services as a last resort
- Sector leads have a particular responsibility for ensuring that humanitarian actors working in their sectors remain actively engaged in addressing cross cutting concerns such as age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights.
- All sectoral groups should include early recovery strategies and procedures for phasing out or handing over activities. In addition, networks of early recovery focal points should be established at the country level to ensure joint planning and integrated response.

Strengthening partnerships and complementarity

- All humanitarian actors should work as equal partners in all aspects of the humanitarian response: from assessment, analysis and planning to implementation, resource mobilization and evaluation.
- Humanitarian partnerships may take different forms, from close coordination and joint programming to looser associations based on the need to avoid duplication and enhance complementarity. To be successful, therefore, sectoral groups must function in ways that respect the roles, responsibilities and mandates of different humanitarian organizations. There must be recognition of the diversity of approaches and methodologies that exist amongst the different actors. All humanitarian actors are to be given the opportunity to fully and equally participate in setting the direction, strategies, and activities of the sectoral group.

Ensuring appropriate links with Government/local authorities

- Humanitarian actors should build on local capacities and develop and maintain appropriate links with Government and local authorities.

Accountability

- It is up to individual agencies to determine levels of participation in the work of the different sectoral groups. The cluster approach itself does not require that humanitarian actors be held accountable to sector leads. Likewise, it does not demand accountability of non-UN actors to UN agencies. Individual humanitarian organizations can only be held accountable to sector leads in cases where they have made specific commitments to this effect.

Predictability

- The 'provider of last resort' concept is critical to the cluster approach, and without it the element of predictability is lost. It represents a commitment of sector leads to do their utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response.

1.2 THE ROLE OF OCHA

The Humanitarian Coordinator – with OCHA support – is responsible for establishing and maintaining comprehensive coordination mechanisms based on facilitation and consensus building. These mechanisms should be inclusive of all the actors involved at the country level. There will continue to be significant demand for common systems and services, such as information management tools, advocacy and resource mobilization. At the country level, OCHA continues to provide support to the Humanitarian Coordinator in four main areas: coordination; information management; advocacy and resource mobilization; and policy development

1.3 ADDING VALUE THROUGH COORDINATION

- Coordination is a service function that creates an enabling environment for organizations working in the sector.
- It does this through facilitation of a consensus management process, the aim of which is to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation on behalf of all stakeholders.
- The planning, management, and information infrastructures are facilitated by a single 'Cluster Lead' focal point in the form of the 'Cluster Coordinator', through whom subsequent decision-making is channelled.
- Its legitimacy is derived through inclusiveness and participation, where the voice of the smallest is heard and represented
- Coordination management is a proactive and action oriented process which must balance the need for robust 'leadership' within an operational framework of diversity and competition
- Rapid progression from passive sharing of information to cooperation and collaboration is implicit throughout the process as the programme planning of individual organizations will eventually shift to accommodate evolving needs and the requirements of other agencies.
- The coordination function works most *effectively* when appropriate 'best practice' technical advice and the analysis generated from reliable evidence-bases is applied within a strategic framework that guides collective action such that needs are prioritized and gaps are filled.
- The coordination function works most *efficiently* when duplication of effort is avoided, and economies-of-scale through application of common services (and the potential synergies of co-location) are harnessed. Such common services include mapping (and establishment of common denominators within a harmonized information management architecture), and analysis (trends, gaps, stakeholders),
- Apart from the benefits derived from systematized use of common services, the collective Cluster 'leadership' approach adds value within and across Clusters by enhancing:
 - Transfer of knowledge
 - Legitimacy through wider engagement and inclusivity
 - Coherence of standards
 - Leverage at national, local authority, and community level
 - Sharing of values
 - Strategic Planning
 - Advocacy, with the Cluster speaking with one voice
 - Predictability

- Accountability

1.4 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

- There is a difference between integrating the policies, strategies, and activities of inter-dependent sectoral needs and the integration of issues which affect all sectors equally, such as human rights and gender. The Cluster approach as currently devised seems to merge the two.
- For the Emergency Shelter sector, integration of Camp Management, Water-Sanitation & Hygiene, and Protection sectoral approaches with the housing and livelihoods approaches of the Early Recovery sector from as early on as possible in the planning phase is critical not just to good emergency response but to disaster reduction and sustainable development efforts overall.
- Cross-cutting issues consist of
 - Age
 - Diversity
 - Environment
 - Gender
 - Sexual & Gender-Based Violence
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Human Rights
 - Psycho-Social
 - Protection