Cluster Approach Evaluation 2
Synthesis Report

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Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the members / standing invitees of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

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Acronyms

3Ws . . . . Who does What Where (an information management tool)
ACAPS . . . . Assessment Capacities project
ASEAN . . . . Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAP . . . . Consolidated Appeals Process
CCCM . . . . Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CERF . . . . Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF . . . . Common Humanitarian Fund
CWGER . . . . . . Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery
DPA . . . . United Nations Department of Political Affairs
DPKO . . . . United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC . . . . Democratic Republic of Congo
ERC . . . . Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERF . . . . Emergency Respond Fund
ETC . . . . Emergency Telecommunications
FAO . . . . United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FSNAU . . . . Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia
GBV . . . . Gender-Based Violence
GenCap . . . . . . Gender Standby Capacity
GPS . . . . Global Positioning System
GRAD . . . . Gaza Response Activity Database
HC . . . . Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT . . . . Humanitarian Country Team
HERF . . . . Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund
HRF . . . . Humanitarian Response Fund
IASC . . . . Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC . . . . International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA . . . . International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP . . . . Internally Displaced Person
IFRC . . . . International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO . . . . International Labour Organization
IPC . . . . Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
INEE . . . . Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies
INGOs . . . . International Non-Governmental Organizations
INSARAG . . . . International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOM . . . . International Organization for Migration
IRA . . . . Initial Rapid Assessment
MSF . . . . Médecins Sans Frontières
NATF . . . . Needs Assessment Task Force
NFIs . . . . Non-Food Items
NGO . . . . Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA . . . . United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

oPt . . . . The occupied Palestinian territory

OSOCC . . . . On-Site Operations Coordination Centre

ProCap . . . . Protection Standby Capacity

SMART . . . . Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions

SMS . . . . Short Message Service

TORs . . . . Terms of Reference

UN . . . . United Nations

UNAIDS . . . . . . The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNDAC . . . . . . United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system

UNDP . . . . United Nations Development Programme

UNEP . . . . United Nations Environment Programme

UNFPA . . . . United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR . . . . United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRWA . . . . . . United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
in the Near East

WASH . . . . Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WFP . . . . United Nations World Food Programme

Illustration 1
Places visited for the evaluation
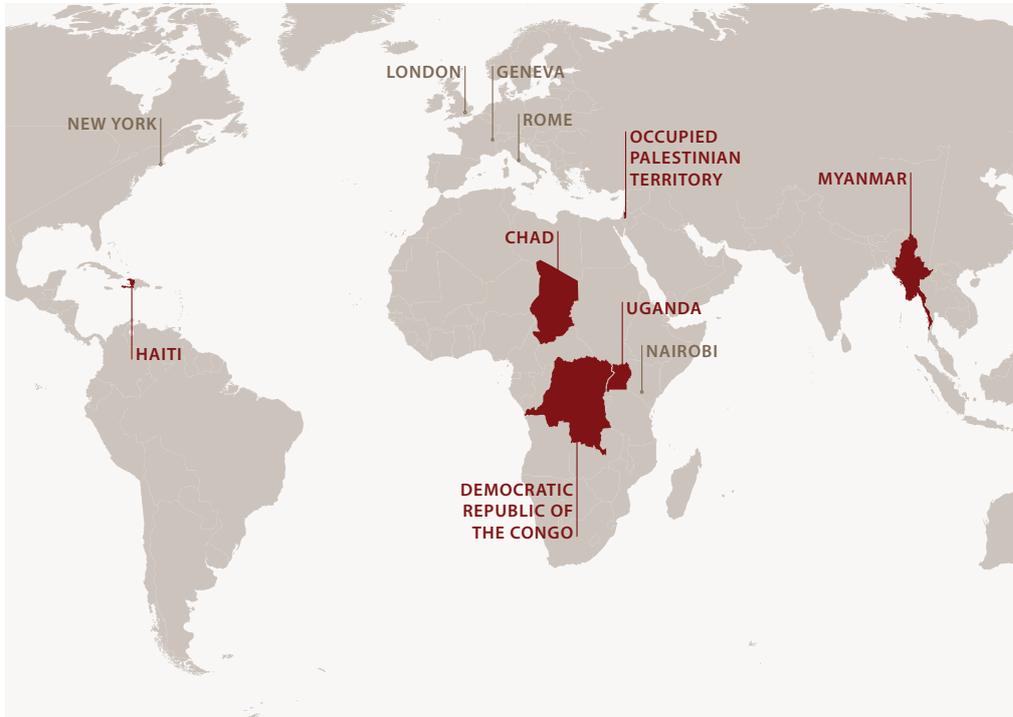
Executive Summary

The cluster approach was introduced as part of humanitarian reform in 2005. It seeks to make humanitarian assistance more effective by introducing a system of sectoral coordination with designated lead organizations. Since 2005, much energy, time and money have been invested in the implementation of the cluster approach at global and country levels. The shape and functioning of the cluster approach on the ground has continuously evolved in this time as humanitarian actors have adapted the initial design to their needs and constraints.

This evaluation assesses the operational effectiveness and main outcomes of the cluster approach to date and aims to develop recommendations on how it can be further improved. It draws most strongly on six country studies,[1] but also on global and regional interviews, a survey among humanitarian actors, as well as literature and document analysis.

Developing and implementing the cluster approach has required a significant financial investment. Over $ 57 million has been raised through global appeals, global cluster lead organizations have contributed from their own budgets and annual coordination costs in each country with active clusters are several million dollars. This corresponds to less than 1% of total humanitarian aid.[2] The country studies revealed that the cluster approach to date has contributed to the following main *improvements and benefits* in the context of humanitarian reform:[3]

- *Coverage* of humanitarian needs has improved in some thematic areas. Depending on the country context, this includes gender-based violence, child protection, disability, water and sanitation and nutrition.

- *Gaps* in humanitarian assistance are better identified and *duplications* are reduced. As a result, humanitarian actors can better target their assistance and resources are used more efficiently.

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1   Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and Uganda

2   The global appeals covered the period between April 2006 and March 2008. They focused on capacity building at the global level, especially the training of staff, the creation of stockpiles and the development of standards, guidelines, systems and tools. The global appeals, as well as funds raised for coordination at country level, amount to less than 1% of total aid (an average of 0.74% for the global appeals and around 0.6% for example in the cases of the oPt and DRC).

3   The cluster approach was not only designed to improve coordination, but also to strengthen global preparedness. Since the question of preparedness was covered in phase 1 of the evaluation, it was explicitly not part of the terms of reference for this evaluation. As a result, the service clusters of logistic and emergency telecommunications, which focus strongly on global preparedness and were often no longer active in the case study countries, received less attention in this evaluation than the response clusters.

- The ability of humanitarian actors to *learn* is increased through peer review mechanisms and enhanced technical and sometimes normative discussions.

- Organizations assuming coordination tasks exert more *predictable leadership*. There is greater clarity concerning leadership roles and more, better trained staff is dedicated to coordination. As a result, almost all humanitarian actors agree that coordination has improved through the introduction of the cluster approach. National and local actors, as well as newly arriving international actors, thus have a clearer point of contact.

- *Partnership* between UN agencies and other international humanitarian actors has become stronger, especially as NGOs increasingly assume co-lead or co-facilitator roles. This improves information sharing, strengthens humanitarian advocacy power and enhances coherence, as cluster members adopt common positions concerning specific operational questions and support the development and dissemination of local standards.

- The introduction of the cluster approach strengthens the *humanitarian identity* of cluster members, thus mobilizing actors and resources for humanitarian assistance.

- Clusters improve the planning and quality of proposals for major *funding appeals*, such as the Common Appeals Process (CAP) or Flash Appeals.

The cluster approach is also faced with important challenges. In its current state of implementation, it has the following main shortcomings and faces the following main challenges:

- In their current implementation, clusters largely exclude national and local actors and often fail to link with, build on, or support existing coordination and response mechanisms. Among other reasons, this is due to insufficient analysis of local structures and capacities before cluster implementation, as well as a lack of clear transition and exit criteria and strategies. As a result, the introduction of clusters has in several cases weakened *national and local ownership and capacities*. Furthermore, most response clusters do not use or promote *participatory approaches*.

- The cluster approach can threaten *humanitarian principles*. This is possible in situations where cluster members are financially dependent on clusters or their lead organizations and where cluster lead organizations are part of or maintain close relationships to integrated missions, peacekeeping forces or actors involved in conflicts.

- Poor cluster *management and facilitation* in many cases prevents clusters from reaching their full potential. Thus, clusters are often process- rather than action oriented. Many coordinators are not trained well enough in facilitation techniques, lack a common, basic handbook or toolkit and, especially at the sub-national level, often do not have sufficient time dedicated to coordination.

- Inter-cluster coordination is ineffective in most cases and there is little integration of cross-cutting issues. *Multidimensional and cross-cutting issues* are neglected in most assessments and are not sufficiently taken into account in the humanitarian response in the case study countries.

The introduction of the cluster approach is an organizational change process that requires up-front investments and generates benefits over time. Five years into that process and based on largely qualitative evidence collected in six countries, the evaluation team concludes that these investments are beginning to pay off as the benefits generated by the cluster approach to date already slightly outweigh its costs and shortcomings. It is also important to note that the direct financial costs of coordination are borne by donors and agencies, whereas the costs resulting from the absence of coordination would be imposed on affected countries and populations. Moreover, there is hardly any fundamental or principled opposition to the cluster approach among humanitarian actors anymore. Provided that improvements are made, the approach has significant potential for further improving humanitarian response and thereby enhancing the well-being of affected populations. This potential justifies further efforts and investments to improve and strengthen the implementation of the cluster approach.

The following table outlines six main recommendations that are critical for enabling the cluster approach to unfold its potential by building on its strengths and mitigating and addressing shortcomings, challenges and potential risks. The table also shows which findings gave rise to those recommendations.

Table 1
Overview of findings and recommendations

Findings related to recommendations	Recommendations
Coordination and links between the cluster approach and existing coordination and response mechanisms is weak. **§§ 44, 45, 48** This can weaken capacity, duplicate structures, undermine the sustainability of achievements and weaken ownership. **§§ 44, 45, 106, 107** The cluster approach can facilitate links between international humanitarian actors and national and local authorities and civil society. Yet, in the examined case studies, the international focus of the cluster approach has undermined national ownership. **§ 107**	**Recommendation 1** **Identify existing preparedness, response and coordination mechanisms and capacities and link with/support/complement them where appropriate** 1 Conduct an analysis of the context, as well as existing coordination and response mechanisms and capacities before implementing clusters and ensure appropriate links with rapid response mechanisms. 2 Identify appropriate partners in national and local authorities. 3 Strengthen cooperation and coordination between clusters, national actors and development actors at every stage from preparedness to response and the transition to development.

Leadership responsibilities have not been sufficiently mainstreamed in cluster lead organizations.

§ 24

OCHA plays a critical role for making clusters work at country level by providing the framework and infrastructure for coordination.

§§ 36, 37, 38

Interactions with and accountability to Humanitarian Coordinators remain minimal in most cases.

§§ 51, 65

Only in DRC were the roles and responsibilities of different coordination mechanisms clearly defined .

§ 42

Co-lead arrangements with NGOs have positive effects on partnership.

§ 61

Clusters often lack exit strategies or develop them too late.

§ 108

Many clusters are not managed effectively enough and cluster coordinators often have not enough time, insufficient coordination skills or are too junior.

§§ 23, 33

There is no general basic and practical guidance for cluster coordinators and critical general elements of guidance are missing.

§§ 27, 31

Information sharing and management have improved, but are still problematic.

§§ 71, 72

**Recommendation 2
Strengthen cluster management and implementation modalities**

1 Continue to strengthen the "mainstreaming" of cluster lead responsibilities.

2 Clarify, recognize and strengthen the role of OCHA.

3 Strengthen the role of Humanitarian Coordinators in the cluster approach.

4 Define clear roles and responsibilities for different meetings and fora and ensure that clusters are adequately represented at the strategic level, at both the global and the country levels.

5 Reinforce the role of international NGOs in clusters.

6 Clarify the criteria, processes and terminology for cluster implementation, transition and exit.

7 Provide cluster coordinators with a standard, basic cluster management handbook or tool kit.

8 Ensure that cluster coordinators, especially at sub-national level, have sufficient time and adequate skills to fulfill their responsibilities.

9 Improve information sharing and management.

Currently, clusters often remain too abstract and not relevant enough to activities on the ground.

§ 33

Clusters rarely use or promote participatory approaches.

§§ 101, 102

The participation of national and local NGOs in clusters remains marginal.

§§ 110, 111

In several cases, clusters were involved in adapting global standards to local circumstances or in developing local standards.

§§ 84, 85

Clusters facilitate the sharing of assessment results, but do not use their potential to improve assessment methods through learning.

§§ 74, 75, 76, 77

The integration of cross-cutting issues is minimal.

§§ 96, 97

Inter-cluster coordination is in most cases weak.

§§ 39, 40

Clusters enhance the ability of the humanitarian system to learn and have the potential to further increase this effect.

§§ 68, 122, 123

Recommendation 3
Enhance the focus on strengthening the quality of humanitarian response in cluster operations and activities

1 Ensure that clusters have a clear operational focus.

2 As a contribution to creating more accountability to affected populations, strengthen the role of clusters in using and promoting participatory approaches.

3 Facilitate the participation of national and local NGOs and strengthen their capacities.

4 Further strengthen the role of clusters in defining, adapting, using and promoting relevant standards.

5 Engage clusters in coordinating and improving needs assessments.

6 Ensure integration of cross-cutting issues in assessments, policies, tools, training, guidance, strategic planning and operations.

7 Improve mechanisms to deal with multidisciplinary issues and inter-cluster gaps.

8 Further strengthen learning.

Many resources were invested into the cluster approach at global level, but global cluster support at country level is perceived as low.

§§ 128 (table), 29

The use of short-term global coordinators creates turn-over problems and they often lack relevant knowledge about the local context.

§§ 30, 31

Many clusters have dedicated coordinators at national, but not at sub-national level, where the main coordination tasks arise.

§ 23

Centralized decision-making can slow the pace of response.

§ 116

Recommendation 4
Increase the focus of resources for the cluster approach on the local level

1 Strengthen training on facilitation, coordination and cross-cutting issues on the national and sub-national levels, minimize turnover of coordinators and improve handover processes.

2 Provide dedicated part-time or full-time coordination capacities for sub-national clusters.

3 Create reporting links between global and national clusters and ensure that national clusters support sub-national ones.

4 Define decision-making procedures between national and sub-national clusters so that operational decisions can be decentralized.

The relationship between clusters and funding mechanisms is highly ambivalent.

§§ 53, 54, 55

Important benefits can arise from the involvement of clusters in planning processes, including invigorated clusters, their greater ability to implement strategies, better quality of funding proposals through peer review, better situation analysis, better prioritization of projects and fewer duplications.

§§ 52, 53, 54, 55, 56

The involvement can be counterproductive when clusters are involved in allocation decisions because that can create conflicts between cluster members, lead to "horse-trading" in proposal selection and create conflicts of interest for cluster lead organizations.

§ 53

Cluster leads rarely act as real "providers of last resort", yet this role would be important enable clusters to fill gaps.

§§ 94, 133

Recommendation 5
Provide sufficient funding and define adequate ways for linking clusters and financing mechanisms

1 Provide adequate funding for coordination activities.

2 Ensure adequate funding for cluster strategies and activities "sponsored" by clusters, by:

• Strengthening the link between clusters and pooled funds.

• Creating strategic links between clusters and bilateral donors.

• Strengthening links to and the inclusion of non-traditional donors.

3 Improve the governance of funding mechanisms to limit conflicts of interest and ensure direct access of international and local NGOs to funding and enhance the transparency of financial transactions linked to clusters.

4 Further define and clarify what "provider of last resort" entails and strengthen this role.

When cluster members are financially dependent on cluster lead organizations and clusters maintain close relationships to integrated missions, peacekeeping forces or actors involved in a conflict, clusters can threaten the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality. This can contribute to an erosion of humanitarian space and make strictly humanitarian actors reluctant to engage in clusters.

§ 120

Clusters as coordination(+) platforms are not in a position to address deeply rooted political and institutional questions.

§§ 83, 134, 137

Yet, these questions present an obstacle to the effective functioning of clusters, for example in the case of conflicts between status-based and needs-based approaches to providing assistance to IDPs and other affected groups, or governance and institutional issues in the Emergency Telecommunications and Food Security/Food/Agriculture Clusters.

§§ 83, 135, 136

The prioritization of the cluster function of Early Recovery has led to a neglect of efforts to mainstream early recovery and cluster activities have raised mandate questions.

§§ 99, 134

Food Security Clusters at country level showed positive results.

§ 135

Humanitarian actors are concerned about the name of the 'oneresponse' website.

§ 121

Recommendation 6
Resolve outstanding policy issues at the global level: i) links to peacekeeping and political missions and humanitarian space, ii) institutional issues

1 Develop concrete, context-sensitive guidelines on the linkages between clusters and peacekeeping and political missions.

2 Strengthen decisions of Humanitarian Country Teams relating to humanitarian space through an increased involvement of NGOs.

3 Focus the activities of global clusters on identifying and addressing conflicts and systemic incoherence.

4 Ensure that the Early Recovery Cluster at country and sub-national level focuses on and enhances its advisory function.

5 Finalize discussions and create a global Food Security Cluster.

6 Resolve conflicts relating to the governance of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster.

7 Rename the 'oneresponse' website.

To ensure adequate follow-up to these recommendations, the newly created IASC Task Team on Coordination should take the following steps:

- Identify a coordinator for each of the six thematic recommendations.

- Develop a management response plan for all six recommendations, drawing on special input from the six thematic coordinators. The management response plan should indicate which of the recommendations are accepted, amended or rejected and assign responsibilities and timeframes for implementation.

- Make the thematic coordinators responsible for following up with different addressees of 'their' recommendation to track progress in implementation and, if necessary, adapt the management response plan. Jointly plan activities and communication with individual agencies among the coordinators.

- Through the thematic coordinators, develop learning formats, allowing agencies to benefit from each other's implementation experiences.

1 Introduction

1 In 2005, the Emergency Relief Coordinator in close coordination with the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) initiated an ambitious reform of the humanitarian system based on a thorough review of its operations. This reform aims at strengthening the effectiveness of humanitarian response to emergencies across the globe. It builds on four pillars: humanitarian financing,[4] the Humanitarian Coordinator system, partnership among all humanitarian actors and the cluster approach. The cluster approach 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.

Humanitarian reform and the cluster approach

2 When introducing the cluster approach, the IASC requested an evaluation of its implementation in two phases. Phase 1 of the evaluation was finalized in 2007 and focused on processes related to the implementation of the cluster approach.[5] Phase 2 focuses on the outcomes generated by the cluster approach and takes a country-level perspective to bring the reality on the ground back to decision makers at the global level.

3 After five years of implementation the evaluation is timely, because significant resources have been invested in the cluster approach and important experiences have been collected. The evaluation is guided by two main aims:

Purpose of the evaluation

- To assess the main outcomes of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular reference to the role of the cluster approach and other components of the humanitarian reform process and the overall operational effectiveness of the cluster approach in facilitating and supporting the coordinated humanitarian response at country level.

- To present suggestions on how the cluster approach can be further improved and strengthened.

The results of this evaluation were presented to the IASC Working Group, which has created a Task Team on Coordination that will create a management response plan in reaction to the recommendations made.

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4 Initiatives to strengthen humanitarian financing include the introduction of new funding mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Pooled Funding, but also strengthening existing mechanisms such as the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) or the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. For a comprehensive review of humanitarian financing instruments, please refer to Stoddard (2008) or Barber et al. (2008) for the CERF.

5 See Stoddard, Harmer et al. (2008).

4 This report presents the methods used and background information on humanitarian reform and the cluster approach (chapters 2 and 3). Main findings relating to the ingredients for effective clusters, immediate results of cluster activities and the effects of these activities on the quality of humanitarian response and the humanitarian system are discussed in chapters 4 to 6. Chapter 7 draws out the implications of these findings for the "logic model" of the cluster approach, while chapter 8 presents general conclusions and an overview over the main achievements and shortcomings or challenges for the cluster approach. Chapter 9 provides recommendations on how to further strengthen the cluster approach.

Report content and structure

2 Method

2.1 Overall approach

5   The evaluation used a bottom-up approach, drawing inferences from the results of six case studies analyzing the implementation of the cluster approach at country level. The analysis of the country cases was guided by a common framework building on the logic model developed in the Phase Two Cluster Evaluation Framework.[6] The analytical framework is explained in detail in the Inception Report[7] and includes key evaluation questions and a related set of 19 scaled indictors. Using the same framework for all six country cases helped to identify common findings across a set of diverse cases. The evaluation team used two three-day team retreats to identify common key findings and country-specific differences. Annex 4 contains an overview of major findings and shows which sources they are based on.

Bottom-up approach

6   Since the indicators of the country study framework are qualitative and have ordinal scales, cluster ratings at country level cannot be aggregated for the synthesis report. The synthesis report thus features results relating to individual clusters only where the evaluation team identified commonalities across all country studies and contains an overview of country-level ratings in Annex 2.

Indicators and cluster portraits

7   The evaluation mainly builds on qualitative data derived from primary sources, direct observation in the field (e.g. participation in coordination meetings, site visits), key informant interviews and document review at the country level. Quantitative data is used where available and relevant to the cluster approach. Interviews at the global level focused mainly on cluster lead and co-lead agencies, as well as focal points for cross-cutting issues (s. Annex 5). The evaluators also conducted a literature review (s. Annex 6) and a survey with mainly open-ended questions to triangulate findings from the country studies and to provide inspiration for developing recommendations (s. Annex 7).

Mainly qualitative data

8   The evaluation included stakeholders from the UN system, international humanitarian NGOs (including those not participating in the cluster approach), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donors, and, where possible, national and local authorities, local civil society representatives and the affected populations.

Stakeholders

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6   Alexander (2009)
7   Steets et al. (2009)

9 The evaluation has seven major outputs. Six stand-alone country reports[8] present findings and recommendations for each country. This synthesis report summarizes the main findings relating to the cluster approach, its immediate results and its effects on the quality of humanitarian response and develops recommendations for the global level.

2.2 Scope of the evaluation

10 The Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase 2 has the following scope:

- *Evaluation criteria:* The evaluation assesses the performance of the cluster approach according to the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and effects, as defined by ALNAP (2006) and as detailed in the indicators.[9]

Table 2
Case study countries

Countries[10]	Selection criteria	Context
Haiti (Oct-Nov 2009)	Sudden onset / disaster (hurricane), plus protracted crisis	Integrated mission
Myanmar (September 2009)	Sudden onset / disaster, plus protracted crisis in some regions In transition	Complex political context
Chad (Oct-Nov 2009)	Protracted crisis / conflict Other coordinating mechanisms pre-existing	Peacekeeping mission
The occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) (November 2009)	Protracted crisis / conflict Recent cluster implementation	Political access problems
Uganda (September 2009)	Protracted crisis /conflict Strong engagement with the government In transition	
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Nov-Dec 2009)	Protracted crisis / conflict and disasters	Integrated mission

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8   Available at http://www.gppi.net/approach/consulting/cluster_approach/
9   Cf. Annex 3.
10 The country names used throughout the report are those used by the United Nations and are not intended to express any political position of the evaluation team.

- *Geography:* The evaluation is based on six country studies, pre-selected by an inter-agency steering committee. Table 2 provides an overview of the case selection. In addition to these six countries, evaluators conducted in-person interviews in Geneva, New York, Rome, London and Nairobi (focusing on practices in Somalia).

- *Time:* The evaluation covers the development of the cluster approach since its introduction in 2005. It also takes into account the results of other relevant evaluations, particularly the Humanitarian Response Review, the IASC interim self-assessment, the Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase 1 and several NGO studies on the cluster approach.[11]

- *Clusters and organizations:* The evaluation analyzes all clusters implemented and cross-cutting issues relevant to the six countries. The stand-alone country reports provide information on individual clusters and show that individual cluster performance varies strongly between countries and between clusters. However, common strengths and weaknesses can be found across clusters and they are discussed here.

- *Other elements of humanitarian reform:* The evaluation considers the other pillars of humanitarian reform, especially concerning predictable financing, the role of Humanitarian Coordinators and the Global Humanitarian Platform, when and where they intersect with and impact the cluster approach.

- *Levels:* The evaluation analyzes the functioning of the cluster approach, the direct results of cluster activities and their effects on the quality of humanitarian assistance, as well as on the humanitarian system.

2.3 Limits of the evaluation

[11] The Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase 2 is limited by methodological and data issues, as well as financial, capacity and time constraints. The most important limitations are:

- *No impact assessment and difficulties of attribution.* Directly attributing changes in the situation of the affected population to improved humanitarian response and changes in humanitarian response to the cluster approach has proven difficult. Therefore, the evaluation cannot measure impact, but delineates the direct results and further effects of the cluster approach on humanitarian response.

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11 Adinolfi, Bassiouni et al. (2005); IASC (2006); Stoddard, Harmer et al. (2008); ICVA (2006); NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2009); Oxfam (2008); Street and Parihar (2007)

- *Limited comparability.* The pre-selected set of country studies includes no countries in which the cluster approach has not been implemented and that could act as a control group. Moreover, data allowing for an in-depth assessment of the situation in country before the introduction of the cluster approach was difficult to obtain. This limited the evaluation team's ability to compare the cluster approach to alternative coordination mechanisms. The evaluation team sought to address this limitation as far as possible by identifying in-country control groups on the sub-national level, such as regions with humanitarian crises where clusters were not active.

- *Limited involvement of affected populations and the government.* As described above, directly attributing changes in the situation of the affected population to the cluster approach is difficult. However, all country evaluation teams conducted group discussions with affected populations and used their input to verify findings and hone the evaluators' attention to critical issues through the collection of stories and perceptions. Additionally, in some countries the evaluators had difficulties gaining access to national and local government authorities.

- *Evaluation and meeting fatigue.* At least three country studies faced a high level of evaluation and meeting fatigue among stakeholders in country. A more careful case selection could have helped avoid related difficulties for both the evaluators and country teams.

- *No presentation of beneficiary-level baselines.* The evaluation was also intended to create baselines. The country reports provide an assessment of individual clusters according to scaled indicators, which can be used as baselines for cluster performance. The evaluation team also attempted to collect cluster-specific technical indicators relating to the situation of affected populations. Clusters, however, currently use a broad range of different indicators and their systematic compilation and comparison would have exceeded the scope and mandate of this evaluation. Moreover, several clusters are currently working on similar initiatives. To avoid duplication, the evaluation team therefore did not compile beneficiary-level baseline indicators.

- *Preparedness.* An important task of global clusters is to strengthen preparedness, for example by strengthening surge capacities for technical and coordination experts, stockpiling relevant equipment and materials (in the case of the service clusters) and developing standard operating procedures. This evaluation did not analyze the effectiveness of preparedness measures, since the subject was sufficiently covered in phase 1 of the evaluation.

- *Bottom-up approach vs. global level recommendations.* While the findings for this synthesis report are drawn from the country level, many of the recommendations aim at the global level. Despite efforts made by the team to understand processes and activities at the global level, the scope of the evaluation did not allow for a detailed assessment of all ongoing political processes, including concerning other pillars of humanitarian reform (such as financing and the humanitarian coordinator system) or other reform processes (such as integrated missions). Therefore, the evaluation team faced limitations developing the detailed steps required to implement some of the recommendations.

2.4 Organization of the evaluation and quality management

12 The evaluation was carried out by a consortium between the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) and Groupe Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement (Groupe URD). The team consisted of eight evaluators and was led by Julia Steets (global team leader) and François Grünewald (technical team leader).

13 The evaluation was overseen by a task team at OCHA led by Claude Hilfiker and a steering group comprised of stakeholders from the UN, donors and NGOs. Furthermore, an advisory group of humanitarian experts acted as a sounding board for ideas and provided advice on methodological, strategic, practical and technical issues.[12]

14 Further elements of quality management include de-briefing and feedback workshops held at the end of each country visit, comments provided by the respective country teams,[13] OCHA, the steering group, UN agencies, NGOs, donors and the advisory group and an internal peer review process. Preliminary evaluation results were presented for feedback at the IASC Working Group session in Nairobi in November 2009. A zero draft of the synthesis report was discussed in a multi-stakeholder workshop in Geneva in March 2010 and a draft version was discussed at the IASC Working Group session in April 2010.

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12 For a list of members of the Advisory Group and brief terms of reference, see http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/gppi/Cluster_II_Evaluation_Advisory_Group.pdf.

13 An exception is the Haiti country case study. Due to the earthquake on January 12, 2010, the evaluation team and the OCHA task team did not want to burden humanitarian actors providing critical relief with demands for feedback on the case study.

3 Background

3.1 Humanitarian reform and the cluster approach

15 In 2004, UN Emergency Response Coordinator Jan Egeland commissioned a review of the international humanitarian system.[14] It identified major gaps in several areas of humanitarian response, as well as problems of coordination, especially between the UN, the Red Cross Movement and NGOs. The cluster approach was introduced as part of the reform efforts to address these challenges. It is a system under which UN agencies are designated as "lead agencies" for all major areas of humanitarian response. Lead agencies are responsible for strengthening system-wide preparedness and technical capacity and ensuring predictable leadership, accountability and partnership. Lead agencies convene coordination meetings at global and country level and are supposed to act as "providers of last resort" where gaps arise in the response.

16 It is hard to pin down exactly how the cluster approach was or is intended to work. While the definition is much clearer now than in 2005/6, the cluster approach continues to evolve and humanitarian actors hold different opinions concerning its specific objectives and modes of implementation. Before this evaluation started, OCHA, in cooperation with cluster lead agencies and a multi-stakeholder steering committee, for the first time developed a "logic model" for the cluster approach.[15] It identified predictable leadership, partnership & cohesiveness and accountability as outputs; gaps filled and greater coverage, as well as ownership and connectedness as outcomes; humanitarian response according to standards as intermediate effects; and improved overall humanitarian conditions and well being of beneficiary populations as the desired long-term impact of cluster activities.

17 In practice, clusters were introduced for nine areas of response and two service areas. Additionally, four relevant cross-cutting issues were identified (see box 1). Cluster lead agencies, in some cases together with a non-UN "co-lead", convene interested parties at the global level to develop surge capacities, stocks, technical guidance, trainings, tools and operational support. In emergencies where the cluster approach has been implemented, a lead organization (often, but not necessarily the same as the global lead organization) is designated, which organizes meetings at the national, in most cases at the sub-national and sometimes also at the provincial level (see illustration 2). These clusters usually meet regularly – on a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis, depending on the intensity of the crisis –, share information and provide mutual feedback among members, create cluster strategies and work plans, contribute to the preparation of major funding appeals,

Goals of the cluster approach

*"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, at the country level the aim is to strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity."
(IASC Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006)*

Clusters as coordination[+] platforms

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14 Adinolfi, Bassiouni et al. (2005)
15 See chapter 7.

such as the Common Appeals Process (CAP), or organize joint activities. As such, clusters act as platforms for achieving coordination, as well as elements that go beyond mere coordination, such as peer review, learning, or the organization of a common response ("coordination$^{(+)}$ platforms"). The main differences to previous sector-based coordination systems include the clear designation of global lead organizations; the creation of a global coordination forum; and the responsibility of lead organizations to act as "providers of last resort". The service clusters differ from the response clusters in that they provide services to other humanitarian organizations, rather than the affected population, have a stronger focus on global preparedness activities and, where necessary, act as the main service provider, rather than as provider of last resort.

Box 1 Clusters and cross-cutting issues and their lead / focal agencies at the global level

Clusters for response areas
· Agriculture Cluster (FAO)
· CCCM Cluster (UNHCR/IOM)
· Early Recovery Cluster (UNDP)
· Education Cluster (UNICEF/Save the Children)
· Emergency Shelter Cluster (UNHCR/IFRC)
· Health Cluster (WHO)
· Nutrition Cluster (UNICEF)
· Protection Cluster (UNHCR)*
· WASH Cluster (UNICEF)

Service clusters
· Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (OCHA/WFP/UNICEF)
· Logistics Cluster (WFP)

Cross-cutting issues
· Age (HelpAge International)
· Environment (UNEP)
· Gender (Co-chairs of the IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender, currently UNFPA and Winrock International)
· HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
*The Protection Cluster includes a range of specific areas of responsibility with designated focal point agencies. At country level, especially child protection and gender-based violence are typically organized as "sub-clusters" and often enjoy a similar status to independent clusters.

Illustration 2
Levels of the cluster approach

GLOBAL LEVEL	· Dedicated global cluster coordinator · Surge capacity specialized in coordination · Consolidate, develop and disseminate guidelines and tools · Provide trainings · Provide operational support, pre-position supplies.
REGIONAL LEVEL (only for Myanmar)	
COUNTRY LEVEL	
NATIONAL LEVEL (all countries)	· Some dedicated cluster coordinators · Mobilization of resources, link with funding mechanisms and donors · Interaction with HCT · Policy and decision-making · Strategic planning (development of standards, compilation of information, etc) · Interaction with national authorities · Inter-cluster coordination
PROVINCIAL LEVEL (in Chad and DRC)	
LOCAL LEVEL (all countries)	· No dedicated cluster coordinators · Operational coordination · Implementation level · Interaction with local authorities

3.2 Implementation at country level

18 By November 2009, the cluster approach had been implemented in 36 countries and the intention is to extend it to all countries with a Humanitarian Coordinator.[16] At country level, the implementation of the cluster approach varies significantly. Key differences relating to the six case-study countries include:

"Cluster approaches": differences in implementation

- *Types of emergencies.* Clusters were implemented in response to sudden-onset emergencies, e.g. Myanmar and Haiti, as well as to protracted, sometimes "forgotten" crises, such as Uganda, DRC and Chad.

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16 For the complete list of countries, see http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/ Portals/1/cluster%20approach%20page/clusters%20pages/WASH/CA_with_implementation_dates- Nov.2009.pdf

- *Geographic coverage.* Clusters can be implemented in entire countries or territories, for example in the oPt, or for limited geographic areas of a country, as in Uganda, DRC, Chad and Myanmar. Partial implementation can be due to the geographic concentration of an emergency or to political pressures not to classify certain situations as "humanitarian", including in Karamoja/Uganda and the border areas of Myanmar. Clusters are never implemented for refugee situations, where UNHCR has an overall mandate for coordination.[17]

- *Coverage of thematic areas.* Various numbers of clusters, ranging from six to eleven, were implemented in the case study countries. In several cases, different clusters were combined at country level.

- *Level of integration with existing mechanisms.* Sector-based coordination mechanisms existed in all case study countries before the implementation of the cluster approach. While global guidance clearly specifies that clusters are intended to strengthen sectoral coordination and that relevant fora can be called clusters or sectors, countries chose very different approaches and clusters were either introduced in addition to sectors, replaced them or were merged with them.[18]

- *Country-specific challenges.* Different country contexts present specific challenges for the implementation of the cluster approach. This ranges from questions concerning the interaction between clusters and peacekeeping or integrated missions in Haiti, Chad and DRC, to political or security-related access constraints in Myanmar, the oPt, Chad and DRC.

- *Terminology.* There is no uniform use of terms to describe clusters. Thus, some countries continue to use the term "sectors" for all or some clusters,[19] "sub-clusters" can either refer to clusters at the level of provinces or thematic sub-groups or working groups and shared cluster lead arrangements can be termed "co-lead", "co-chair", "co-facilitator" or "co-stewardship" arrangements. This report will use "cluster" as the main term for sector-based coordination forum, "sub-cluster" for thematic sub-groups, "co-lead" for shared leadership arrangements and "co-facilitator" for instances where cluster lead organizations delegate or hand over cluster coordination tasks at national or sub-national level to other organizations.

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17 An exception are Palestinian refugees, for which the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) is responsible.

18 IASC (2006b)

19 In the oPt, for example, some thematic areas remain "sectors", whereas others have become "clusters" and this has created confusion among humanitarian actors.

4 Findings: The functioning of clusters

19 The main findings of this evaluation are presented in three steps. This chapter analyzes findings relating to the functioning of clusters as coordination(+) platforms. It discusses relevant inputs, including predictable leadership, guidelines and global cluster support; key processes including cluster focus and management and the role of OCHA; and critical links to other systems and processes, such as existing coordination mechanisms and other pillars of humanitarian reform. The next chapter discusses the direct results of cluster operations. Chapter 6 focuses on the effects of the introduction of the cluster approach on the quality of humanitarian response and on the humanitarian system, i.e. those elements most closely linked to the well-being of the affected population.

20 For all findings, sections first provide an explanation of the issue under scrutiny, then present the *overall finding*, followed by evidence and reasons explaining the finding, as well as a more differentiated analysis of good practices or areas still requiring improvement.

4.1 Stronger, more predictable leadership

21 The existence of a clearly designated and accepted organization responsible for organizing coordination is a critical factor for making coordination work. The cluster approach was intended to make the system of sector lead agencies more reliable and predictable by clearly designating lead organizations for each sector at the global level, which would also act as default lead agencies at country and sub-national level. Under the cluster approach, these lead agencies are also supposed to act as "provider of last resort" and this aspect is discussed below, in section 6.1.

22 *Overall, the cluster approach has managed to strengthen the predictability and degree of leadership. Humanitarian actors mention this frequently as one of the most important added values of the cluster approach.*

Leadership is stronger…

23 Most lead organizations have accepted their leadership role and provide resources for coordinators. Thus, many clusters now have either full-time or part-time dedicated cluster coordinators. Many organizations also provide coordination training including information on humanitarian reform and facilitation skills, either via global clusters or individually. However, significant differences exist between lead organizations, as well as countries. The evaluation team still encountered many cases where coordinators had not enough or no clearly dedicated time for coordination, had insufficient coordination and facilitation skills, had not been trained and/or were too junior. As a result, humanitarian actors often perceive cluster meetings as inefficient. In some cases, coordination meetings were held irregularly or not at all, as in the case of the Early Recovery Cluster in Uganda, the

… but remains variable

Agriculture and Nutrition clusters in Haiti and the Food Security Cluster in South Kivu (DRC). Moreover, many clusters have full-time coordinators at national, but not at sub-national level, where the main coordination tasks arise, leading to an increase in bureaucracy and a focus on processes.

24 These variations are related to problems of mainstreaming the leadership role within organizations. Despite recent efforts to enhance it, mainstreaming remains incomplete.[20] Thus, for example, agency representatives at country level do not usually have cluster responsibilities in their terms of reference. They often have a development background and are not well informed about cluster activities (which creates problems when they are supposed to represent clusters at Humanitarian Country Team meetings), and managers often resent the time their staff spend on coordination. These mainstreaming problems reflect an at least initial reluctance of some agencies to embrace the cluster approach, but also general problems of translating headquarter decisions to country and field operations. If political will exists, organizations with a strongly hierarchical culture may achieve mainstreaming more easily, but this "command and control" culture may also impede their capability to act as facilitators.

Mainstreaming problems

25 Other international humanitarian actors at country level broadly accept and appreciate the leadership role exercised by UN agencies and, where applicable, their co-leads. While many NGOs were initially skeptical about the cluster approach, they now widely support dedicated leadership roles at country level and have toned down their criticism at global level. This is less often the case where UN agencies lack competence or capacity, for example when they operate outside their areas of core competence, are not represented at field level, or when financial issues create conflicts of interest. Co-lead and co-chair arrangements with governments and NGOs are also broadly supported, though they can create or exacerbate difficulties of information flow and often lack clearly defined roles and responsibilities.[21]

Broad support for leadership at country level

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20 Humanitarian actors at the global level have recognized the lack of mainstreaming of cluster lead responsibilities at the country level as a problem and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has established a task team on mainstreaming. As a result of this work, cluster lead organizations have among others sent a "Joint letter from Cluster Lead Agencies to their Directors / Representatives at Country Level" in October 2009 (available at http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1145136, accessed February 2010). Similarly, phase 1 of the cluster evaluation, for example, recommended creating more formal commitment to the cluster approach at the highest executive level.

21 A guidance note on co-lead arrangements is currently being developed at global level, but has not yet been finalized. For a summary of the positions and recommendations of NGO "co-facilitators" in DRC, see Humanitarian Reform Coordinator, January 2009.

4.2 Important but incomplete guidelines from global IASC and national HCT and / or OCHA

26 When introducing a reform, guidance is necessary to explain the purpose and implementation modalities of the reform, clarify roles and responsibilities and help actors address difficult issues. For the cluster approach, the global IASC develops most general guidance, with Humanitarian Country Teams and OCHA country offices often complementing and / or disseminating this guidance (see box 2 for an overview of global guidance notes).

Box 2: Global guidance notes

The following guidance notes have been developed at the global level or are currently being developed:

· Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response (IASC, 2006)
· Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at the Country Level (IASC, 2006)
· Operational Guidance on designating Cluster Leads in ongoing emergencies (IASC, 2007)
· Operational Guidance on designating Cluster Leads in new emergencies (IASC, 2007)
· Rome Statement on Cluster Rollout (IASC, 2007)
· Operational Guidance on the concept of "Provider of Last Resort" (IASC, 2008)
· Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads and OCHA in Information Management (IASC, 2008 [currently under revision])
· Terms of Reference for the Humanitarian Coordinator (IASC, 2009)
· Policy direction on the relationship between Humanitarian Coordinator and Head of Office in Field (OCHA, 2009)
· Guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams (IASC, 2009)

Currently under development

· Terms of Reference for Cluster Coordinators at Country Level (IASC, final draft)
· Discussion/guidance note on arrangements for cluster co-chair and co-facilitation / co-stewardship arrangements at country level (IASC, under development)
· Guidance note on the role of cluster/sector coordinators in the CAP (IASC, draft stage)
· Operational Guidance for Cluster Leads on Working with National Authorities (IASC, final draft)
· Operational guidance on needs assessment (IASC, under development)
· Guidance on transition from the cluster approach (IASC, under development)
· Guidance on inter-cluster coordination (IASC, under development)

27 *Since clusters were first introduced in pilot countries including Uganda and DRC, much progress has been made and the cluster approach has moved from a "period of total darkness"[22] to a relatively well understood concept and practice.[23] At the same time, however, existing guidance is often not sufficiently known, including by cluster coordinators. Similarly, guidance on critical aspects is missing and strongly demanded by humanitarian actors, including on:*

- Criteria and processes for implementation, transition and exit[24] to address the confusion in cases where clusters are implemented only for some disaster-affected areas of a country. Whether clusters should be implemented or not was, for instance, contested or badly understood in the cases of Karamoja (Uganda), western DRC, West Bank (the oPt) and regions outside the east of Chad. Guidance for transition and exit could build on the local guidance developed in Uganda[25] or the well-prepared phase-out process in Myanmar.

- The relationship between clusters and existing coordination structures to improve links to, support for or integration with existing mechanisms.

- The relationship between clusters and peacekeeping missions to address problems arising for example in Haiti, DRC and Chad.

- Criteria for cluster membership to enable country teams to better assess and address the risks and opportunities of including donors, the private sector, military actors and certain civil society actors.

- Guidance on cluster co-chair or co-facilitation arrangements at country and sub-national level.

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22 OCHA official.

23 The IASC Interim Self-Assessment in 2006, for example, found that "The inability of the IASC to agree on clear guidance for the "cluster approach" and to disseminate this to the field at the beginning of the process led to considerable confusion at the field level and did not inspire confidence in the new approach. The Self-Assessment confirms that confusion persists in some cases and remains an obstacle to implementation." IASC 2006, p. 3.

24 Cf. Stoddard, Harmer et al. (2008), § 228.

25 See IASC Uganda, Process to Merge or Modify or Close a Cluster / Sub Cluster, 2007; and Adapting the Clusters During Transition in Uganda, October 2008.

4.3 Little perceived support by global clusters

28 Global clusters are meant to support the work of national and sub-national clusters for example by providing surge capacity specialized in coordination, by developing technical guidelines and tools and by pre-positioning supplies (see Annex 1 for a selection of support products). Clusters have raised over $ 57 million through two global cluster appeals to finance support activities. Individual clusters obtained very different levels of funding (see box 3). Gender is the only cross-cutting issue included in the global cluster appeals.

29 *The evaluation team found evidence that global clusters provide more support than is acknowledged on the ground. However, support of response clusters in the case study countries is low, especially at sub-national level.*

Low (perception) of global support

30 Reasons for the low perception of global support include: [26]

- National and sub-national clusters do not know what is on offer because global clusters do not proactively disseminate their support tools. Cases like the latest Health Cluster coordinator in Myanmar or the Early Recovery Cluster coordinator in the oPt, who emphasized the crucial support they received from the global level, are the exception rather than the rule.

No proactive dissemination

Staff turn-over problems
Good practice:
No staff rotation after emergency in Haiti
Self-assessment tool for logistics coordinators in Haiti
Global support not relevant

- Due to high staff turn-over (which can be related to funding problems) and problems of knowledge management, clusters and their coordinators are not aware of support that has been provided earlier on. Thus, when coordinators leave the country, they often take manuals and information stored on computers with them.

- Especially in countries where the cluster approach was implemented early on, such as Uganda, DRC and Myanmar, global support is perceived as little

Box 3: Funding of global clusters through global appeals[26]

Logistics	9.6 mil. US$
Protection3	8.5 mil. US$
ETC	6.3 mil. US$
Shelter	6.0 mil. US$
WASH	5.8 mil. US$
CCCM	5.5 mil. US$
Nutrition	5.4 mil. US$
Early Recovery	4.4 mil. US$
Health	3.5 mil. US$
Education*	0.9 mil. US$
Gender	0.8 mil. US$
Agriculture*	0.2 mil. US$

* Only second global appeal, because clusters did not exist at the time of the first appeal

Source: Financial Tracking Service

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26 Not all funds committed through the global appeals can be clearly allocated to individual clusters.

relevant as the development of support mechanisms lags behind developments in country and global clusters often learn more from local experiences than vice versa. Moreover, global support is not always relevant as situations are often very country-specific.

31 The evaluation team observed the following elements of global support being used at country level:

- *Surge capacity:* Especially national cluster coordinators were often drawn from global rosters – either from clusters or individual organizations – which train them in facilitation and/or technical skills. Deployments, however, were often very short-term, deployment gaps appeared frequently and while members of global rosters could often contribute interesting experiences from other countries, they also often lacked relevant knowledge about the local context. In some cases, deployment of global experts therefore led to the implementation of approaches that were not appropriate to the context. In the oPt, for example, several actors complained about the inappropriate "Darfur mindset" of international experts. Several case study countries also had deployments of GenCap and ProCap advisors. Where they were used as advisors, attention to the cross-cutting issues of gender and protection was increased. This effect diminished clearly when they were used as (sub-)cluster coordinators.

- *Training:* Global clusters also provided technical and coordination training for cluster coordinators (as well as cluster co-facilitators in the case of several clusters in DRC) and sometimes cluster members. While many cluster coordinators have not yet had the opportunity to attend coordination trainings because of scheduling and capacity issues, all those who did warmly welcomed the opportunity and judged them as useful. This includes the coordinator trainings held in Zanzibar by WHO, the trainings offered by the Logistics, Shelter and Health Clusters, cluster coordinator trainings provided by individual agencies such as UNHCR or the IFRC and local facilitation trainings, including those offered by local hubs in Labutta, Myanmar.[27]

- *Learning exercises:* Several clusters conducted learning exercises that were predominantly judged as useful by cluster participants in country. The most comprehensive among them is the WASH Cluster learning project, which includes a compilation of lessons learned in different circumstances, such as urban and rural settings. Other exercises include the "future directions questionnaire" of the Nutrition Cluster, which informed the cluster's global strategy, and the Emergency Shelter Cluster consultation project collecting

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27 For more information on trainings, see for example http://www.clustercoordination.org or http://www.humanitarianreform.org, last accessed February 2010.

feedback on support provided globally and locally. Similarly, the Logistics Cluster conducted a member survey in the oPt.

- *Handbooks:* Some clusters, for example WASH, Child Protection, Health and Shelter, have developed coordinator handbooks containing relevant information for coordination, and are present at least at national level. Several others, e.g. Education, are developing similar handbooks based on those that already exist. There is, however, no general basic cluster coordination handbook available to all clusters.

4.4 Insufficient cluster focus and management

32 The effectiveness of clusters also critically depends on their management and focus.

33 *Many clusters observed in the case study countries are not managed effectively enough and lack a clear focus on improving humanitarian response.*

34 In all country cases, humanitarian actors say one of their primary concerns is that too many coordination meetings take too much time and are not effective enough, especially when clusters exist alongside other coordination meetings. The evaluation team also found that many clusters have a tendency to focus on process issues, especially at capital level. The following factors significantly influence the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings:

Criteria for effective meetings:

- *The coordinator's leadership capacity* and ability to apply relevant facilitation techniques, such as participatory agenda-setting, time-keeping, follow-up on action points, ensuring the presence of decision-makers at critical points, small group work, facilitation of decision-making, etc.

Skill and capacity of coordinator

- *The scheduling of cluster meetings according to need.*

Meetings scheduled on need

- *The focus of clusters on concrete operational issues*. Many clusters were seen as ineffective because they remained abstract and not very relevant to concrete activities on the ground; often served to collect information for lead agencies lacking access to the field because of security reasons; or spent a lot of time catering to the requests of OCHA and different financing mechanisms rather than focusing on how to address concrete problems. By contrast, the Education Clusters in DRC and Haiti were rated positively because they disseminated relevant standards, the Health Clusters in the oPt and Myanmar for their focus on joint decisions, strategic discussions and useful guidance and the Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods Cluster in Uganda because it was very action-oriented.

Concrete, operational focus

4.5 A crucial role for OCHA, but weak inter-cluster coordination

35 Within the United Nations architecture, OCHA has the main responsibility for humanitarian coordination. In the context of the cluster approach, OCHA's role has been poorly defined, though it and the Humanitarian Coordinators are customarily responsible for inter-cluster coordination. Effective inter-cluster coordination is necessary to ensure that multidisciplinary and cross-cutting issues that cannot be tackled by individual clusters alone are addressed appropriately and that inter-cluster duplications and gaps are eliminated.[28]

36 *At country level, a well functioning OCHA is critical for making clusters work by providing the framework and infrastructure for coordination.[29] In most cases, however, OCHA has failed to create an effective system of inter-cluster coordination, especially at the strategic level.*

Strength of OCHA correlates with cluster performance

37 A comparison among various countries or provinces shows a clear correlation between the strength and quality of OCHA offices and the functioning of the cluster system. OCHA's ability to provide the infrastructure for coordination depends strongly on the capacities of its offices.

38 Since there was little central guidance, the role of OCHA in relation to the cluster approach has developed in a bottom-up fashion in the countries. In the case study countries, OCHA is active in the following areas:[30]

Roles of OCHA

· Information management;

· Ensuring country-specific and coherent implementation of the cluster approach (e.g. explaining and disseminating the approach or adapting and disseminating terms of reference for different types of coordination meetings);

· Guiding the evolution of the cluster approach over time, for example by participating regularly in cluster meetings and helping to set the agenda for cluster activities. In some cases, the influence of OCHA was so strong that clusters were mainly concerned with responding to its requests and seemed to work more for OCHA than vice-versa.

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28 The IASC is currently developing a guidance note on inter-cluster coordination. Other relevant documents include: IASC (2008); OCHA (2007); terms of reference for Humanitarian Coordinators; OCHA strategic plan; draft cluster coordinator terms of reference. In its strategic plan 2010, OCHA states that one of its objectives is to develop a "more rigorous and standardized OCHA approach to supporting inter-cluster coordination", available at http://ochaonline.un.org/ocha2010/strategicplan.html, last accessed February 2010.

29 Cf. Cosgrave et al. (2007), p. 34 ff and Young et al. (2007), p. 19.

30 OCHA has assumed an even more extensive role in the clusters for Somalia, where it provides each cluster with an information manager.

- Strengthening accountability towards the Humanitarian Coordinator;

- Ensuring a common agenda for the country team;

- Ensuring, together with the Humanitarian Coordinator, humanitarian space in integrated missions;

- Inter-cluster coordination.

39 Inter-cluster coordination, however, is weak both at the global level and in almost all case study countries, except DRC.[31] Operational inter-cluster coordination mechanisms exist, both at the global and country levels. However, especially at country and sub-national levels, they focus largely on information sharing and do not systematically identify multidisciplinary issues, duplications or gaps, nor follow up on identified issues. Strategic inter-cluster coordination mechanisms do not currently exist at the global level. At country level, Humanitarian Country Teams or their equivalents are mainly understood as inter-agency, rather than inter-cluster meetings. In cases where they address inter-cluster issues, they often face the problem that country representatives or heads of agencies do not or cannot adequately represent cluster positions and interests because they lack relevant information.

Insufficient inter-cluster coordination…

40 The evaluation team observed several effects of ineffective inter-cluster coordination, including:

… and its effects.

- Important multi-sectoral, inter-cluster and cross-cutting issues are often not addressed, such as for example land issues in Myanmar and Uganda, conflicts over the use of schools as shelters in Haiti or other issues related to recovery and livelihoods strategies.

- Overlaps between clusters persist, such as for example between WASH, Education and Health concerning water and sanitation access in schools and coordination can be poor for example between agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods activities covered by Food / Food Security / Agriculture and Early Recovery respectively.

- The creation of targeted multidisciplinary groups for specific issues remains an exception. Positive examples include thematic groups on drought in the oPt, the merging of clusters with a high potential for overlap in Chad, and a working group on water scarcity in Myanmar.

41 Several clusters, including CCCM, Protection and Early Recovery are thematically defined in such a way that they overlap with inter-cluster coordination. The camp

Problems of "meta-clusters"

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31 Cf. Cosgrave at al. (2007), p. 46

coordination function of CCCM, for example, implies inter-cluster coordination in camp-based IDP settings. Due to a lack of capacity for fulfilling this overall coordination role, however, the CCCM cluster has not been found to exercise this role (as opposed to the camp management role) effectively. For organizations adopting a rights-based approach, access to all types of humanitarian services becomes a question of human rights and therefore falls under the purview of the Protection Cluster. The activities of the Protection Cluster in these situations can duplicate the overall information collection and management role of OCHA. The Early Recovery Cluster, finally, has assumed the role of a "gap-filling" cluster and has in some cases fulfilled a valuable inter-cluster role by identifying inter-cluster gaps. In Haiti, for example, the Early Recovery Cluster created a much appreciated task force on street cleaning and in the oPt it organized a strategic inter-cluster workshop. In most cases, however, there was little to no follow-up on these issues because the Early Recovery Cluster lacked the necessary capacity and mandate.

42 In DRC, inter-cluster coordination is supported through a system of recommendations. Each cluster develops recommendations that local IASC and inter-cluster meetings follow up. Where necessary, they create ad hoc sub-groups to address inter-cluster issues. Inter-cluster coordination, as well as coordination between clusters and other fora, has also been facilitated in DRC through a clear definition of mandates, roles and responsibilities for these different mechanisms. Thus, each level of coordination in North Kivu has its terms of reference clarifying objectives, activities, composition, schedule and sometime even the proposed agenda for meetings.

Good practice: Inter-cluster coordination in DRC

Definition of TORs for coordination fora in DRC

4.6 Insufficient coordination with existing mechanisms

43 Links to, coordination with or support for existing coordination mechanisms is critical, as concerned governments bear the primary responsibility for humanitarian response. Stronger links with appropriate actors can strengthen ownership among national actors, strengthen local capacity, improve the connectedness to longer-term development processes and help avoid the multiplication of coordination mechanisms.

44 *While there has been some progress over time, coordination between the cluster approach and existing mechanisms remains insufficient. While coordination within clusters in most cases improves compared to earlier systems, clusters often undermine existing coordination mechanisms and add to the multiplication of fora.*

Little coordination with existing mechanisms

45 Humanitarian actors identified the failure to coordinate or link with existing coordination mechanisms as a serious shortcoming in most case study countries. Thus, in many cases sector groups and clusters exist in parallel and are not sufficiently linked. In Chad, for example, sector groups do not include cluster

Multiplication of coordination mechanisms

representatives. In Uganda and Haiti, sectors were weakened through the introduction of the clusters and clusters did not sufficiently integrate relevant NGO coordination fora. In the oPt, clusters and sectors are insufficiently linked to the main aid coordination system, the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat.[32]

46   A good practice example is in the oPt, where the WASH Cluster builds on a pre-existing local civil society forum named e-WASH and works very closely with the water authority in Gaza. In Myanmar, the response was mainly led by ASEAN and gradually embedded into the Tripartite Core Group. In DRC, clusters systematically replaced and improved the work of sector meetings.

Good practice: Building on the e-WASH platform in the oPt

47   The evaluation team identified various reasons for this lack of coordination or integration, including:

Reasons for lack of coordination or integration

- Existing government- or civil society-led coordination fora are often weak or dysfunctional and government authorities often have insufficient capacities for taking over coordination responsibilities.

- Due to the "myth of speed"[33] and the international mindset of humanitarian response and the cluster approach, too little analysis of existing structures and capacities takes place before clusters are implemented.

- International actors have few incentives to integrate with existing mechanisms.

- The cluster approach seeks to enhance predictability, which implies less flexibility for adapting to local circumstances.

48   An issue that also emerged, but was not fully explored by this evaluation, is the unclear distribution of roles and lack of coordination between the cluster system and international mechanisms for immediate crisis response (typically in the first two weeks after sudden-onset disasters), in particular with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system (UNDAC) and its coordination mechanisms: UNDAC field teams, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and On-Site Operations Coordination Centres (OSOCC).

Lack of coordination with UNDAC

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32   Similarly, the cluster system for Somalia is not linked to the main aid coordination system there, the Somalia Aid Coordination Body.

33   The notion was coined by Anderson and Woodrow (1989).

4.7 Positive, but at times unexplored, interactions with other pillars of humanitarian reform

49 Since the cluster approach was introduced as one of several pillars of humanitarian reform,[34] this section analyzes whether these pillars mutually support or undermine each other. It focuses on interactions with the Humanitarian Coordinator system and financing mechanisms, as well as donors, while the effects of the cluster approach on partnership are dealt with below in section 5.1. Humanitarian Coordinators were intended to play an important role in supporting the implementation of the cluster approach. They can do so by securing agreement on establishing clusters and designating lead organizations, holding cluster lead organizations accountable and establishing mechanisms for inter-cluster coordination, needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

50 *The potential for mutually beneficial interactions between the cluster approach and the Humanitarian Coordinator system remains largely unexplored. Interactions between clusters and financing mechanisms to date are mostly strongly positive, but negative examples highlight important risks when clusters and funding mechanisms are too closely intertwined.*

51 Interactions between clusters and *Humanitarian Coordinators* (HCs) remain limited in most cases.[35] Some positive examples, however, demonstrate that there is a clear potential for a mutually supportive relationship. The most important example is DRC, where OCHA closely followed cluster activities and provided bi-annual cluster assessments and a strong Humanitarian Coordinator could rely on clusters to provide inputs for a more strategic and coordinated response. Clusters, in turn, benefited from the inputs and feedback of the Humanitarian Coordinator. To a lesser degree, the interaction was also positive in the oPt, where clusters feed into and strengthen the Humanitarian Country Team chaired by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. The case studies highlight two crucial conditions for a fruitful relationship between the Humanitarian Coordinator and clusters: A strong OCHA office channeling information and a strong and capable Humanitarian Coordinator.[36]

Weak interactions between clusters and most HCs

52 Concerning financial mechanisms, the evaluation team found the strongest positive interaction between clusters and the *Consolidated Appeals Process* (CAP) and *Flash Appeals*, which already existed before the introduction of humanitarian reform. In all case study countries that had a CAP or Flash Appeal, clusters are

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34 The Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) is currently (as of spring 2010) developing an "accountability framework" explaining the overall humanitarian architecture, including links between clusters, Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams.

35 For more details, see section 5.2.

36 Following criticism of the pool of available and acting Humanitarian Coordinators, the IASC established new recruitment procedures and endorsed new TOR for humanitarian coordinators in March 2009, see http://oneresponse.info/clusterapproach/leadership/publicdocuments/Revised%20HC%20TOR,%204%20May%2009.doc

very actively involved in preparing appeals and often in vetting proposals. As a result, the quality and coherence of appeals has increased. By the same token, this process provides strong incentives for clusters to develop strategies and work plans, as well as indicators and sometimes even monitoring systems. This strong mutual relationship, however, also contains the risk of distracting attention away from other, more direct and operational common activities. Moreover, donor preferences result in funding trends in CAP and Flash Appeals that typically favor large international organizations over smaller and more local ones. This leads to disappointment among many NGOs and reinforces their financial dependence on UN agencies.

53 Interactions with *pooled funds* depend on the type of fund used and range from moderately positive to highly ambivalent. Of the case study countries, only DRC receives a significant share of its funding through a pooled fund, a Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF),[37] which is linked to the CAP and open to all humanitarian actors, including national organizations. Here, the clusters were first given an active role in deciding on the allocation of funds. On the one hand, this provided clusters with financial resources to implement commonly developed strategies and thus empowered them. On the other hand, this poisoned the atmosphere within clusters and led to horse-trading between organizations, at times deteriorating the quality of projects receiving funds. Under the new system in DRC, clusters are only involved in setting priorities and defining criteria for allocation decisions, not in making these decisions directly. Also under this model, however, it is difficult to fund multidimensional projects. Other country-level pooled funds like Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs), Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) or Humanitarian Emergency Response Funds (HERFs) are much smaller and typically only used to respond to unforeseen needs outside the CAP.[38] In the case study countries, these funds were often used by individual organizations, and only sometimes to fill critical cluster gaps.

54 UN agencies in many of the case study countries also appealed to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a global pooled fund. Only UN agencies can receive funds through the CERF, but most of them work through partners. Through the cluster approach, cluster members are increasingly becoming involved in preparing CERF requests, which is a positive trend. Interview partners in the case study countries also emphasized, however, that there are often significant delays in the transfer of funds between UN agencies and their NGO partners and that the source of these funds often remains unclear to NGO partners. NGOs therefore frequently demand direct access to the CERF or similar mechanisms to diminish their financial dependence on UN agencies.[39]

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37 CHFs are also used in Sudan and the Central African Republic.
38 EFRs, HRFs or HERFs are managed by OCHA and currently used in Afghanistan, Columbia, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, the oPt, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
39 Cf. Cosgrave et al. (2007), p. 40.

55 Positive interactions between clusters and pooled funds thus occur where pooled funds are used to implement cluster strategies (rather than projects of individual agencies), which happens more often when funding decisions are taken at country level; where all humanitarian actors have equal access to the funds; and where cluster-based peer review processes enhance the scrutiny of proposals. Negative interactions are frequent where only UN agencies are eligible for funding; where clusters and their lead organizations are directly involved in taking funding decisions; and where special windows for multidimensional and multi-sectoral proposals are lacking.[40]

56 *Individual donors* vary strongly in their attitude towards the cluster approach, sometimes espousing different positions in different countries. While some strongly support it, participate in cluster meetings and give priority to funding proposals developed by clusters, others do not interact with clusters at all. Comparably to the humanitarian financing system at large, clusters to date have proven largely unable to engage with non-traditional donors such as the private sector, private foundations and non-Western donors such as China or the Gulf countries.

Conditions for pooled funds

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40 Cf. also Oxfam (2008), Stoddard (2008) and the DRC country study of this evaluation.

5 Findings: Direct results and activities

57 This chapter presents findings relating to the direct results of cluster activities. They include aspects relevant to relationships, e.g. on partnership and accountability, as well as activities, including information sharing, the coordination of needs assessments and strengthening of coherence.

5.1 Stronger partnership

58 This section covers the relationship between UN agencies and international NGOs, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, whereas relationships to national and local authorities, as well as national and local NGOs are discussed below because they relate more directly to the quality of humanitarian response (section 6.4). When the IASC initially launched its humanitarian reform, partnership was not identified as a central element. Following strong criticism from non-UN organizations that saw humanitarian reform as a top-down, UN-centered endeavor, partnership was later added as a fourth pillar. It builds on the Principles of Partnership developed by the Global Humanitarian Platform.[41]

59 *The introduction of the cluster approach has strengthened partnership between UN agencies and international NGOs, as well as relationships among international NGOs. Risks to partnership arise where clusters take an active role in deciding about the allocation of resources and where clusters are too closely associated with peacekeeping forces or political actors involved in the conflict.*

Stronger partnership between the UN and other international humanitarian actors

60 Initially, many NGOs and other humanitarian actors resisted the cluster approach, interpreting it as UN-centered.[42] Since then, however, much has changed and the evaluation team encountered hardly any humanitarian organization in the case study countries and none via the survey[43] with a fundamental or principled opposition against the cluster approach.[44] This greater level of acceptance of the cluster approach is reflected in a relatively high overall level of participation and commitment, including among "observers" such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In several

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41 Partnership is an agreement between various parties to work together to achieve common goals. It implies a relationship at eye-level. The Global Humanitarian Platform defined the five principles of partnership as equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity (Global Humanitarian Platform, 2007).

42 The IASC interim self assessment (2006), for example, mentions "tensions arising from efforts to implement the cluster approach" (IASC 2006, p. 6), and phase 1 of this evaluation found that "the clusters are still largely perceived as a UN-centric initiative" (Stoddard, Harmer et al., 2008, p. 19).

43 See Annex 6.

44 This finding is confirmed by the recent report of the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project. Based on five mapping study countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan and Sudan), it found that "The level of engagement of NGOs with the cluster mechanism depends on a number of factors. Chief of these is the perception of the value added by the cluster." (NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project, 2009, p. 24)

cases, however, especially in clusters led by WFP, UNHCR and sometimes UNICEF, clusters were mainly composed of implementing partners of the lead agency and had few members without contractual relationships to the lead agency. The presence of NGO liaison officers in DRC and Myanmar enhanced the participation of international NGOs in clusters.

61 Clusters strengthen partnerships between UN agencies and international NGOs, as well as among NGOs through several mechanisms, including:

<div style="float:right; color:#999;">Mechanisms for strengthening partnership</div>

- *Co-lead and co-facilitator arrangements[45]* between UN agencies and non-UN organizations (see box 4 for examples). Overall, such co-lead and co-facilitator arrangements have positive effects in terms of enhancing credibility among NGOs and enabling cluster operations in many cases where UN agencies faced access problems for security reasons.[46] In some instances, however, NGOs did not take up proposals to become co-facilitators because they wanted to maintain their capacity to engage in advocacy vis-à-vis the lead agency; because they did not have sufficient resources for covering the position of a cluster coordinator; because responsibilities as co-facilitator were not clearly identified; or because they feared domination by the UN partner.

- *Generating peer review processes,* for example relating to project proposals for major funding appeals, that require UN agencies to open up to the scrutiny of NGOs. In DRC, for example, organizations present and discuss their activities and this process has helped prevent bad practices.

- *Providing a platform for developing concrete joint activities.* In several cases, cluster members reported that concrete joint activities had arisen out of cluster meetings.

- *Providing a platform for joint advocacy.* Many humanitarian actors highlighted the benefits of stronger advocacy, especially in the area of protection. In Myanmar, for example, the cluster system enabled humanitarian actors to start discussing the sensitive topic of protection with the government. In the oPt, clusters feed into an advocacy subgroup of the Humanitarian Country Team.

- *Providing an entry point for newly arrived actors.* Many humanitarian organizations emphasized that clusters were particularly useful for new and smaller organizations, as they created good opportunities for networking.

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45 In "co-lead" arrangements, UN agencies and other organizations share the formal leadership role at global or country level. In "co-facilitator" or "co-chair" arrangements, the role of the other organization is more restricted and focuses on supporting the running and facilitation of cluster meetings. The exact terminology for these different types of arrangements remains unclear.

46 Cf. NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2010).

Box 4: Examples of NGOs and Red Cross Movement involved in co-lead and co-facilitator arrangements

- Save the Children (Education, global level, DRC, Myanmar, the oPt, Uganda)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Emergency Shelter, global level ("co-convener"), Myanmar)
- International Organization for Migration (CCCM, global level, Haiti)
- Oxfam International / Intermon (WASH, oPt; WASH/Health/Nutrition, Chad)
- Oxfam GB (WASH, DRC)
- Action Contre la Faim (Nutrition, Food Security, DRC)
- Solidarités (Education, WASH, NFI/Shelter, DRC)
- AVSI (Education, DRC)
- NRC (Education, DRC; Shelter, the oPt)
- Lipedem (Education, DRC)
- BDD (Education, DRC)
- Institut St Joseph (Education, DRC)
- Handicap International (Disability, the oPt)
- Merlin (Health, Myanmar and DRC)

62 Under certain circumstances, however, clusters can also undermine partnerships. This includes situations in which clusters are badly managed and facilitated, where clusters are actively involved in making resource allocation decisions (cf. section 4.7) and where clusters, especially the Protection Cluster, is closely linked to integrated missions or peacekeeping forces because this creates loyalty conflicts for cluster lead organizations and raises concerns among NGOs regarding their independence and neutrality.

5.2 Weak accountability to the HC, stronger peer accountability

63 An effective accountability relationship requires standards against which to assess behavior, information about relevant actions and the possibility to reward or sanction them. The cluster approach conceptualizes accountability predominantly as hierarchical accountability between cluster lead organizations and the Humanitarian Coordinator. Beyond this, clusters can also offer valuable opportunities to strengthen peer accountability and to enhance accountability to affected populations. Participation as an element of accountability to affected populations is discussed below, in section 6.3.

64 *In all case study countries bar one, accountability to the Humanitarian Coordinator is minimal. Instead, clusters have started to make valuable contributions to strengthening peer accountability.*

65 The interactions between the Humanitarian Coordinator and clusters were very limited in all case study countries except DRC. This has several reasons, including:

- Humanitarian Coordinators often lack the capacity to engage actively because they fulfill multiple roles, including as Resident Coordinators and deputy special representatives;

- Humanitarian Coordinators often do not have a strong humanitarian background and therefore lack relevant expertise and interest;

- The reporting lines between cluster coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators are problematic. Cluster coordinators formally report via their agency heads to the Humanitarian Country Team (or equivalent), which is problematic because agency heads often lack relevant information. Information about the clusters and their performance is therefore often collected by OCHA, which informs the Humanitarian Coordinator. In this case, much depends on the capacity of OCHA and problems can occur because OCHA has no formal authority over cluster coordinators.

66 In DRC, the Humanitarian Coordinator system and the cluster approach were mutually supportive and the Humanitarian Coordinator was able to actively request that lead agencies exercise their cluster responsibilities. This was only possible because OCHA provided the Humanitarian Coordinator with the necessary information through unofficial bi-annual cluster assessments. In Haiti, OCHA facilitated a processes, whereby clusters conducted strength-weaknesses analyses after the end of their main period of activities.

67 While accountability to the Humanitarian Coordinator can thus have a positive effect on the functioning of the cluster approach, especially by holding lead organizations responsible for fulfilling their roles, the evaluation team found that peer accountability and accountability to the affected population were at least as important for ensuring the quality of humanitarian response and had so far not received sufficient attention in the context of the cluster approach.

68 Regarding peer accountability, clusters are showing promising results, despite the fact that this was not formally promoted as a goal of the cluster approach. Peer accountability has been enhanced because:

- Cluster members provide each other with feedback on project sheets for CAP or Flash Appeals, as well as country or global-level pooled funds. This increases the quality of projects and reduces duplications.

- Some clusters, including most clusters active in Myanmar and Haiti and individual clusters in other countries, such as WASH in the oPt, organize(d) lessons learned exercises or strength / weakness analyses to improve their activities or pass lessons on to clusters active in other countries.

- Humanitarian actors use clusters not only to share information, but also to discuss technical and sometimes more theoretical issues. This enhances the level of discussions held at local level.

- In some instances, for example in Haiti, cluster members also hold cluster lead organizations accountable by actively demanding more commitment and better leadership from them.

Clusters offer much scope for further expanding peer accountability, for example by broadening the practice of peer reviews and by creating better follow-up mechanisms to agreed action points.

5.3 Improved, but still problematic information management

69 Another basic direct goal of the cluster approach is to improve information management, which comprises information collection, sharing and storing (institutional memory). Clusters are designed to coordinate data collection and facilitate information sharing. To play their role effectively, they depend on mechanisms to create or improve institutional memory. According to IASC guidance, clusters are responsible for information management within clusters, whereas OCHA is responsible for information management between clusters (see box 5).

Box 5: Responsibilities for information management

Cluster lead organizations are responsible for:
- Ensuring that all clusters have information management focal points;
- Generating up-to-date cluster-specific information, including for example contact lists, meeting minutes, standard forms, policy or technical guidance, datasets and needs / gaps analyses; and
- Sharing these with cluster members and OCHA.

OCHA's responsibilities include providing:
- Contact directories of humanitarian partners and information management focal points;
- Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes of coordination meetings chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator or OCHA;
- Who does What Where (3W) database and derivative products, such as maps;

Good practice:
Lessons learned exercises in Myanmar, Haiti and the oPt

- Inventory of relevant documents on the humanitarian situation, i.e. mission reports, assessments, evaluations, etc;
- Inventory of relevant common cluster/sector data sets, including population data disaggregated by age and sex;
- Data on the humanitarian requirements and contributions (through the Financial Tracking Service);
- A country-specific or disaster-specific humanitarian web-portal;
- Situation reports;
- Maintenance of common datasets that are used by the majority of sectors/clusters;
- Geospatial data and analysis relevant to inter-cluster/sector decision making;
- Access to schedules, agendas and minutes of cluster/sector coordination meetings.

Source: IASC (2008), currently under review

70 *Clusters create a clearly designated space for information sharing and dissemination that is much appreciated by cluster members and leads to an improved understanding of the situation. Yet, information management and institutional memory remain a serious problem in all six country cases.[47]*

71 Most humanitarian actors in the case study countries mention improved opportunities for sharing and disseminating information and exchanging experiences as an element they strongly appreciate about the introduction of the clusters. Information sharing improves clearly where humanitarian actors develop local or cluster-specific solutions. In most countries, for example, OCHA maintains cluster websites that have proven to be a valuable means for sharing and storing information, but are seldom user-friendly and require intense active maintenance, which is often not available. At the global level, the same is true for the oneresponse Website, though its name causes concern among some members of the humanitarian community. In Myanmar, the Myanmar Information Management Unit provided effective information management services and one hub developed a village-level information system relying on Google Earth and including GPS data. Several clusters have also created specific, custom-made information management solutions that show very positive direct effects on eliminating duplications, reducing aid abuse and coordinating responses. They include for example shelter databases in the oPt and Haiti and an education

Opportunities for information sharing are much appreciated…

Good practice: Information management

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47 During spring 2010, the IASC Task Force on Information Management is undertaking a review of the IASC endorsed Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector leads and OCHA in Information Management as a follow-up to the Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase 2.

database in Uganda. Another good practice example was developed in DRC, where the Food Security Cluster compiled tables of planned projects to identify gaps and duplications early on.

72 Overall, however, there remains much scope for further improving information sharing and management. Aspects requiring improvement include:

- Many clusters use insufficiently facilitated meetings as the primary means for sharing information. This is inefficient and ineffective since it takes up much time, information is easily lost for non-participants and rotating participants, it distracts from strategic planning and problem solving and can create the impression that clusters are mainly a mechanism for reporting.[48]

- The lack of institutional memory, both in cluster lead organizations and among cluster members, remains a crucial problem. Clusters lose valuable information each time cluster coordinators change, which can happen every few weeks, as in the case of Myanmar.

- Important information management tools of OCHA like the "Who does What Where" (3Ws) provide a very useful overview and highlight major gaps, as well as duplications, but are not always user-friendly. In most cases, the 3Ws are not detailed enough to influence concrete planning at the local level. Moreover, the tool can be misleading because it generally does not yet include information on the status of projects, i.e. whether projects are being implemented or only planned and financed or not. Many humanitarian actors therefore suggest adding "when" and "how" to the 3Ws.

- Attempts to introduce more sophisticated and encompassing information management systems like the Gaza Response Activity Database (GRAD) in the oPt, however, show that these systems are very costly to establish, almost impossible to maintain and difficult to access for local organizations.

- Where several organizations record similar information, such as for example UNHCR and OCHA in Uganda, incompatible information management systems sometimes led to inefficiencies and loss of data. Similar problems arise because data types and collection methods vary over time.

- The division of labor between OCHA and cluster lead organizations regarding cluster information and inter-cluster information is difficult to implement as the two overlap in practice.

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48 Cf. Young at al. (2007), p. 20.

5.4 Little coordination of needs assessments

73 Good needs assessments are a precondition for adequate response. Much effort is invested at global level to create joint or coordinated needs assessment frameworks to make it easier to compare crises and improve the quality and coherence of needs assessments (see box 6). Global clusters can contribute to these efforts, while clusters at the national and sub-national level can support project-level or area-based assessments and facilitate the sharing of results, reduce duplications in needs assessments, facilitate peer review and learning on needs assessment methods or facilitate the implementation of joint needs assessments.

Box 6: Current global initiatives relating to needs assessments

Humanitarian actors at the global level have recognized the acute importance of improving the quality and coherence of needs assessments and reducing duplications in their implementation. A range of different current global initiatives[50] therefore focus on needs assessments, including:

· Post-Conflict Needs Assessments, which are multilateral exercises typically implemented by the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank; the Early Recovery Cluster has developed a similar method for Post-Disaster Needs Assessments and is currently developing the early recovery module of Post-Disaster Needs Assessments.
· Operational Guidance on Needs Assessment Coordination, including a web-accessible tool-box (currently under development by the IASC Tasks Force on Needs Assessment (NATF));
· Strengthening surge capacity through a roster of needs assessment experts under the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) (currently being developed by HelpAge, Merlin and NRC under the direction of the IASC NATF);
· Humanitarian Dashboard (currently under development under the IASC NATF, led by OCHA), aimed at presenting key humanitarian information on the affected country;
· Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) of the WASH, Health, Food Security, Shelter and Nutrition Clusters;
· Needs assessment framework for camp coordination and camp management (currently under development by CCCM Cluster);
· Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) (developed by a consortium of NGOs and UN agencies in 2007);
· Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action (developed by Early Recovery/Protection Working Group in 2008)

"There [are] needs assessment projects/frameworks/ initiatives/studies/ tools lurking beneath every desk in Geneva - and still they come, funded by the same donors that funded the previous ones, involving ever-changing combinations of UN and non-UN agencies"
(Survey Participant)

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49 For a comprehensive mapping of individual needs assessment initiatives, please refer to OCHA (2009).

74 *Clusters facilitate the sharing of assessment results, but do not use their potential to improve assessment methods through learning and are not effective enough at avoiding duplications.*

75 Clusters in all case study countries were used to disseminate the results of individual needs assessments and thus informed humanitarian actors better about the situation.

Clusters help disseminate results…

76 However, duplications and quality problems in needs assessments persisted. Affected populations, for example in Myanmar and Uganda, confirmed that they were repeatedly asked the same or very similar questions by several different actors. Moreover, needs assessments very rarely contained sex and age disaggregated data. Reasons for this include:

… but duplications and quality problems remain.

- Many humanitarian actors have strong internal policies on needs assessments that are difficult to change through coordination.

- Needs assessments are crucial for fundraising and as an entry point for organizations to specific areas and populations. Organizations there have strong incentives for keeping individual needs assessments.

- In most cases, clusters do not focus on activities related to needs assessments.

77 While clusters currently rarely exercise this role, they have a clear potential to improve the quality of needs assessment through peer review mechanisms. In DRC the Nutrition Cluster established a data quality management group to ensure that assessment results are credible. In Myanmar clusters supported a joint needs assessment by designing indicators and questionnaires, as well as validating data analysis.

78 Furthermore, the evaluation team identified examples of increased use of joint assessments. This includes a growing number of UN inter-agency needs assessments, for example in DRC, Chad and Myanmar. While some of these assessments have been described as successful, others are problematic because they imply the arrival of large groups of assessors, accompanied by heavy military escorts where the security situation requires for UN agencies, which can overwhelm or intimidate the affected population.[50]

Joint assessments and their problems

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50 Another example is the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSNAU). It combines evidence- and expert-based approaches and relies on field-generated data, multi-year comparisons and peer review. Almost all humanitarian actors and donors active in Somalia rely on the information generated by FSNAU.

5.5 Enhanced coherence

79 An important function of clusters is contributing to a more coherent humanitarian response by providing a platform for discussing and resolving contradictions, developing joint strategies and creating or disseminating relevant standards.

80 *Clusters have managed to create greater coherence in several important operational issue areas, while continuing to allow for a diversity of approaches. Clusters have also made important efforts at adapting global standards to local circumstances or at creating local standards.*

81 The evaluation team found several examples where clusters enhanced coherence relating to concrete issues, including for example:

More coherence in concrete areas

- Clusters agreed on common cash for work or food for work rates and strategies in Uganda, Haiti and Myanmar;

- Clusters agreed on a common composition of food parcels in Uganda, standard agricultural starter kits in Uganda and Chad and Non-Food Items (NFIs) in Haiti and DRC;

- Clusters defined and implemented common approaches to child protection in Chad and Uganda.

- The Food Security Cluster in DRC conducted shared analyses of the food security situation, relying on the Integrated Phase Classification System.

- The Early Recovery Cluster in the oPt led a Rubble Removal Task Force in Gaza and successfully developed a common operational plan for involved partners.

82 At the same time, clusters allowed for a continuing diversity of approaches instead of adopting standardized ones for most other issue areas. This flexibility has allowed humanitarian actors to choose those approaches that are best suited to the situation while providing some space for experimentation and innovation.

Space for diversity

83 Clusters at country and sub-national level are not in a position to address fundamental differences among organizations concerning their approaches and intervention logics. In DRC and in Chad, for example, there is a conflict between the status-based approach to humanitarian assistance for Internally Displaces Persons (IDPs) and other affected groups espoused by UNHCR and the needs- or vulnerabilities-based approach of most other humanitarian actors. This conflict undermines attempts to formulate common strategies and cannot be solved locally. Global clusters have not (yet) become involved in developing solutions for this and similar conflicts.

Fundamental differences unresolved

84 In several cases, clusters at national level were involved in either adapting existing standards to local circumstances or in developing new local standards. In doing so, clusters often cooperated closely with governments and either supported the authorities in developing standards or sought their endorsement for their own standards. This happened for example with nutrition standards in Haiti, standards for community-based child protection systems in Uganda, standards for the mental health and psycho-social support sector in the oPt, the creation of a standard referral pathway for gender-based violence cases in Uganda and Chad and rules on the multiplication of cassava cuttings to prevent the spread of diseases in Uganda.

Clusters develop local standards

85 Many standards are developed at global level, including by the global clusters. The evaluation team found that some, but few clusters were active in disseminating global standards. This includes the Education Cluster, which held workshops on the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) standards in several countries, the WASH Cluster, which promoted hygiene education standards in Myanmar and Uganda and the Shelter Cluster in Myanmar, which disseminated shelter standards. In other cases, however, cluster members resisted their introduction because they had reservations concerning their validity and feared that they could create tensions with neighboring communities, such as for example in the case of global standards relating to the quantity of water available per person.

No monitoring of standards

86 The evaluation team found no evidence that clusters had developed mechanisms for monitoring adherence and compliance to relevant standards. This is partly because clusters and their coordinators and lead organizations do not understand their role as a "policing" one and perceive a conflict between a monitoring or even enforcement role and Partnership.

6 Findings: Effects on the quality of humanitarian response and the humanitarian system

87 This chapter analyzes the effects of the introduction of the cluster approach on the quality of humanitarian assistance and on the humanitarian system, i.e. those elements that are immediately relevant to the well-being and dignity of the affected population.

6.1 Some effects on coverage

88 The main motive for humanitarian reform was addressing priority gaps in humanitarian response, especially in the areas of preparedness, protection, WASH, camp management and food aid, nutrition and livelihoods.[51] Clusters were designed to contribute to this effort by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of assistance through coordination and organizing a collective response to identified gaps, relying on cluster lead organizations as providers of last resort if necessary.

89 *In most cases it is difficult to attribute changes in coverage to the introduction of the cluster approach. By design clusters can address only some causes for gaps. Evidence shows that clusters help avoid duplications and enhance coverage in certain thematic areas, but have a limited overall effect on coverage.*

90 It is difficult in most cases to clearly attribute changes in coverage to the introduction of clusters. This is due to the following factors:

Attribution problems

- *No counterfactual analysis.* The evaluation team could not conduct counterfactual analysis because there was no credible basis for constructing alternative scenarios for the case study countries.

- *No control groups.* The choice of case study countries did not allow for the creation of a control group since clusters had been implemented in all countries. Some case study countries also included areas in which the clusters were not active. But even these settings were not suitable for establishing a control group because conditions in the different areas varied so much.

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51 Cf. Adinolfi, Bassiouni et al. (2005)

- *Unclear causal links.* The case studies included protracted emergencies that allowed for longitudinal analysis and the tracking of humanitarian conditions over time. Even these analyses, however, did not allow for clear causal attributions because many other determining factors were changing at the same time, including the level of security, available funding, climatic conditions and ongoing population movements.[52]

91 By design, moreover, clusters can address only some of several possible causes for gaps. In the case of information problems, clusters can play a very valuable role in raising awareness. Concerning resource constraints, clusters can play an important advocacy role vis-à-vis donors, but it is unrealistic to expect lead agencies to be able to cover major gaps. Relating to insecurity and/or political access problems, clusters cannot address the root causes of the problem, but may play a useful role in facilitating contacts between UN agencies, which tend to face severe access problems, and NGOs that are active on the ground.

Coordination can only address some problems

92 That said, clusters do play an important role in reducing duplications, which improves efficiency and allows greater coverage with the same resources. Most humanitarian actors interviewed in the case study countries can point to examples where clusters have helped to identify and subsequently avoid instances of duplication. In many cases, organizations realized through cluster meetings or the compilation of the 3Ws that they were planning similar projects for the same area. The evidence was most clear in cases where clusters had developed specific tools that systematically uncovered duplications, like the shelter databases in Haiti and the oPt or the education database in Uganda. In these cases, clusters also reduced the abuse of aid, as they identified individuals claiming compensation or receiving support several times, as well as absentee teachers.

Clusters reduce duplications

93 There is also clear evidence of enhanced coverage in those thematic areas of response that had received no or barely any attention before the introduction of the cluster approach. Thus, the case study countries witnessed clearly increased attention to the issues of gender-based violence, child protection and, in the case of the oPt, disability. In DRC, coverage of protection, WASH, education and nutrition issues, as well as the provision of logistics services, also increased clearly.

Evidence for increased thematic coverage

94 Beyond this, however, several arguments and indicators point to the fact that the overall effect on coverage was limited:

Overall effect on coverage limited

- Affected populations, for example in Myanmar, the oPt, DRC and Uganda, did not perceive marked changes in the level and quality of humanitarian response that would correlate with the introduction of the cluster approach.

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52 Similar methodological problems relating to impact evaluations in humanitarian settings are discussed for example in Buttenheim (2009).

- Many clusters do not have the explicit goal of organizing a response to priority gaps. A positive exception is the Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods Cluster in Uganda, which has created a "Plan of Action" outlining detailed response activities, prioritized by affected communities.

- Cluster lead organizations rarely act as providers of last resort in the sense of mobilizing their own resources in order to address critical gaps. Thus, only 26% of survey respondents indicated that they had experienced situations in which a cluster lead agency had acted as provider of last resort. Instead, most lead organizations focus on appealing to donors to provide resources for filling those gaps ("advocates of last resort"), in accordance with recent guidance by the IASC.[53] The exception are lead agencies such as UNICEF that can draw on emergency budget lines, borrow from their regular programs or offer access to emergency stocks to act as genuine providers of last resort at least for some priority gaps. Furthermore, WFP has a special "immediate response account" which can be used by Food, Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications Clusters for start-up funds during the initial stage of an emergency.

6.2 Minimal integration of cross-cutting issues

95 The integration of cross-cutting issues in policies, tools, guidance, strategic planning and operations is important for ensuring the quality of humanitarian assistance. Within humanitarian reform, age, gender, the environment and HIV/AIDS are formally recognized as cross-cutting issues with assigned focal agencies at global level (see box 1). Clusters have formal responsibility for ensuring adequate integration of cross-cutting issues in all stages of the response.[54]

96 *The integration of cross-cutting issues in the activities of clusters and their members has remained minimal in all case-study countries, with only some minor exceptions.*

97 Various kinds of evidence support the observation that cross-cutting issues are not sufficiently included in the six case study countries:

- Hardly any documents at country level, including needs assessments and monitoring reports, contain sex and age disaggregated data. One of the few exceptions is the age, gender and diversity assessment conducted by the Protection Cluster in Chad.

- As evidenced by direct observation and an analysis of meeting minutes, discussions during cluster meetings hardly ever focus on cross-cutting issues.

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53 IASC (2008b)
54 See Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at Country Level.

- Observations of humanitarian practice in the case study countries revealed examples where the neglect of cross-cutting issues created significant problems, which were only addressed reactively by the clusters. This includes for example food distribution practices creating acute security risks for women in Haiti despite preparations by WFP; a lack of gender-segregated sanitation facilities in camps in Haiti and DRC; a lack of prevention and planning for increased sexual abuse and care for persons with special needs during camp closure in Uganda; and a lack of consideration for environmental issues in response operations in Haiti and DRC.

98   While the overall picture concerning cross-cutting issues is thus bleak, some positive examples exist in areas where there is leadership on the issue and dedicated capacities supported the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in clusters. In the oPt, for example, the Disability Sub-Cluster coordinator in Gaza acted as an advisor to other clusters and achieved significantly enhanced consideration for concerns related to disability. In DRC, the work of a GenCap advisor requested via UNICEF achieved that the WASH, NFI and Education Clusters at the national level now have minimum commitments for girls, boys, men and women. Similarly, the early recovery advisory function in the oPt strengthened awareness of early recovery issues. The Logistics Cluster, finally, driven by a strong position of WFP on the issue of HIV prevention in the transport sector, includes HIV/AIDS concerns in its programs that were implemented for example in DRC.

99   Several factors explain why attention to cross-cutting issues is generally insufficient:

- It is unclear who bears what responsibility for promoting and integrating cross-cutting issues at country and sub-national level: the global focal points for cross-cutting issues, cluster lead organizations, coordinators, or OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator as part of their inter-cluster coordination role.

- It is unclear what should count as a cross-cutting issue. HIV/AIDS, for example, was often seen predominantly as a health concern and was integrated in the Health, Nutrition and HIV/AIDS Cluster in Uganda. By contrast, many humanitarian actors would add other items to the list of cross-cutting issues, for example early recovery, disaster risk reduction, protection as "do not harm", disability and human rights. Moreover, in the case of age, there is a confusion whether the term refers to "old age" or all age groups.

- Cluster coordinators often lack necessary expertise or time to focus on cross-cutting issues and relevant guidance is often missing. Additional resources and expertise for gender and protection are provided through GenCap and ProCap, but similar initiatives do not yet exist for other cross-cutting issues.

UNEP, for example, has increased its capacity to ensure the mainstreaming of environment into humanitarian action, but does not have an "Environment Cap" to ensure support at country level when and where needed. UNAIDS is currently planning to create a specific support capacity for HIV/AIDS.

- Where global surge capacities for cross-cutting issues were deployed, they were often used as (sub-) cluster coordinators, including for example the GenCap expert deployed to Uganda and a ProCap expert deployed to the oPt. As a result, they had little capacity for working with other clusters on these issues. By the same token, deployments are more effective where they focus on several clusters. *Misuse of global capacities*

- Some clusters, namely Early Recovery and to a lesser degree Protection, have both a coordination and an advisory function that serves to mainstream their thematic areas into other clusters. In the case study countries, they typically prioritized cluster activities over advisory functions, even though they are often included in the terms of reference of cluster coordinators and though technical experts on cross-cutting issues are sometimes deployed. This often leads to a neglect of mainstreaming issues. *Cluster vs. advisor*

- Focal points for cross-cutting issues, with the exception of Gender, are not members of the global Inter-Agency Standing Committee and thus have limited opportunities to influence policy and strategy decisions. *No representation in IASC*

- Cross-cutting issues are rarely included appropriately at the needs assessment and diagnosis stage, making it difficult for subsequent steps of the response to react to them adequately. *No inclusion in needs assessments*

- The limited use of participatory approaches by clusters can lead to a neglect of cross-cutting issues, especially when they are directly related to their needs, such as gender and disability.

6.3 Very little participation of affected populations

100 A strong involvement of the affected population is necessary to ensure that humanitarian actors can respond adequately to real needs and to protect the dignity of the affected population. The cluster approach confers the responsibility on lead organizations of response clusters to "ensure utilization of participatory and community based approaches in sectoral needs assessment, analysis, planning, monitoring and response."[55] Participation is a necessary, but not a sufficient, element for strengthening accountability to affected populations.

101 *Except for some very notable positive examples, clusters have not been active or effective in*

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55   Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at Country Level

strengthening participatory approaches, either by promoting participatory or community based approaches among their members, or through including affected populations in their own activities.

102 The cluster approach has been strongly criticized in previous reports for neglecting accountability to affected populations.[56] In the case study countries, the evaluation team found no evidence or examples of clusters actively promoting participatory or community-based approaches among their members. Moreover, most clusters failed to communicate their work effectively or use participatory approaches in their own activities. Thus, cluster work plans and strategies were in most cases not discussed with or validated by affected populations. In some cases, important operational decisions of clusters were not even communicated adequately to affected populations, as in the case of Chad, where the Health Cluster decided to transfer a health center from an IDP camp to a village, but failed to inform IDPs of the decision.

No examples of clusters promoting participatory approaches

103 Certain clusters in certain countries stand out as noteworthy exceptions. This includes the CCCM Cluster on Goz Beida (Chad), whose NGO members actively involved IDP populations and their traditional representatives in the day-to-day activities of the cluster; the Shelter Cluster in Gaza, which has adopted terms of reference that clearly refer to participatory approaches; the CCCM Cluster in North Kivu (DRC), which held cluster meetings in different camps to include camp representatives and government officials; the Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods Cluster in Uganda, which used community consultations to validate its action plan and developed a video to facilitate communication about cluster plans and activities; and the Child Protection Sub-Cluster in Uganda, which focused its efforts on establishing community based child protection systems and conducted consultations with affected children as part of its support to the development of a child protection recovery plan for the government.

Good practice in using participatory approaches

104 Reasons for the prevalent failure to use and / or promote participatory approaches include:[57]

Reasons:

- Whether and which participatory approaches can be implemented depends strongly on the local context and situation.

- Participatory approaches are seen as time-consuming and therefore often not deemed practical in emergency situations.

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56 The recent report of the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project, for example, repeatedly emphasizes this point (NGOs and Humanitarian Reform (2009)).
57 Cf. also Oxfam International (2009).

- Most current cluster activities, such as information sharing, technical discussions and the preparation of appeals, do not readily lend themselves to participatory approaches.

- Clusters are in most cases led by UN agencies. Many UN agencies are not operational, but work through NGO implementing partners. As a result, they often have little presence in the field and little direct interaction with beneficiaries.

- In some cases, such as Eastern Chad and parts of DRC, it is difficult to access local areas for security reasons.

6.4 Weakened ownership

105 Ownership refers to the role of national and local authorities (where appropriate) and civil society organizations in the coordination and provision of humanitarian response. Ownership is important because it can help mitigate the typical capacity-reducing effect of international humanitarian assistance or even support the strengthening of local capacities and thereby help ensure that gains achieved through the response are sustainable beyond the crisis phase. The cluster approach was developed as an international coordination and response mechanism. It could strengthen ownership by enhancing the interactions between humanitarian actors and government authorities (where appropriate) and by including national and local NGOs to strengthen their partnerships with international actors, strengthen their capacity and facilitate their access to funding.

106 *Clusters can provide a clear point of contact and forum for linking international humanitarian actors to national and local authorities and civil society. To date, however, clusters have largely failed to integrate national and local actors appropriately and have thereby undermined national ownership. Efforts to strengthen ownership have been made, but with limited success. The relationships between clusters and relevant authorities and the participation of national and local NGOs therefore remain some of the biggest challenges for the implementation of the cluster approach.*

Clusters can undermine ownership

107 The cluster approach was designed to improve the quality and coordination of international humanitarian assistance. By creating a clearer structure, it can facilitate contacts between national authorities and international actors. As they strengthen international capacities, however, clusters can also easily undermine ownership if relevant national and local actors are not sufficiently consulted and included. This effect was most obvious in the pilot countries of DRC and Uganda, as well as in the oPt, where relevant authorities were barely consulted before the implementation of clusters and where the clusters systematically undermined local coordination efforts. In contrast to these experiences, 46% of survey respondents

felt that the cluster approach facilitated the involvement of governments.

108 This problem was recognized relatively early on[58] and some efforts have been made to improve the situation. Thus, for example, the global Inter-Agency Standing Committee is currently (spring 2010) finalizing operational guidance for cluster leads on working with national authorities. To date, however, these efforts have had limited success. Governments/authorities, for example in the oPt, are still infrequently consulted or involved in decisions to implement clusters. At the WASH Cluster in Haiti, meetings were organized at the same time as relevant national meetings, making participation impossible. Even where clusters are systematically trying to implement co-chair arrangements with government or local authority officials, these attempts have rarely resulted in the active participation of authorities. Their engagement often remains formalistic and their commitment low due to a lack of capacity and political will, at times undermining cluster meetings. In part, this is because in most case study countries except Myanmar, clusters either lack exit strategies or develop them too late and therefore neglect the importance of government involvement.

109 Positive examples regarding the involvement of government authorities in clusters in an appropriate manner include:

Good practice: Involving national and local authorities

· An increasing number of clusters work closely with relevant authorities to develop or endorse standards (cf. section 5.5).

· Several clusters have developed close working relationship with their government counterparts, such as the ministries for education, health, or women. This includes for example the Protection Cluster and its Sub-Clusters in Uganda, the Education Cluster in Chad and the oPt, the Health Cluster in Haiti, DRC, Myanmar, Uganda and Chad, the WASH Cluster in Chad and the oPt and the Nutrition Cluster in DRC.

· In Myanmar, clusters have created an entry point for discussing sensitive protection issues with the government.

· In Myanmar, clusters have strengthened regional and national response capacities, due to the involvement of the regional body ASEAN.

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58 Phase 1 of the cluster approach evaluation, for example, found that the involvement of national NGOs and CBOs were among the "most disappointing findings regarding the cluster approach" (p. 16) and that efforts to build national capacity and involve governments in contingency planning "remain limited" (p. 21).

· In Uganda, guidance by the national OCHA office has led clusters to increase their efforts to involve local authorities as co-chairs for cluster meetings and some clusters have started to transfer information and knowledge management tools to local authorities.

· In North Kivu (DRC), the Nutrition Cluster has a government co-facilitator.

110 Where local and national NGOs participated in clusters, they often added other perspectives and a more holistic view of the crisis. In most case study countries, however, the participation of national and local NGOs in clusters remained marginal.[59] Reasons for this include:

· Language and lingo hurdles, as cluster meetings are frequently conducted in English or French, not translated into local languages, and can be heavy with international jargon.

· Technology barriers, as clusters tend to rely heavily on the internet for distributing information.

· Transport problems, making it difficult for local NGOs to participate in meetings taking place at the capital or provincial capital.

· A lack of knowledge about the existence of cluster meetings.

· The often large number of national and local NGOs, combined with the absence of effective coordination mechanisms among them.

· A lack of staff time especially in smaller organizations to participate in coordination meetings.

· A lack of incentives for participation, especially when cluster activities strongly focus on funding processes like the CAP, which channel only marginal amounts to national and local NGOs or when cluster meetings focus only on areas to which international members have access.

· A lack of incentives for international actors to include local organizations.

"In many of the cluster meetings I attended, the facilitator had each organization present and vote publicly on proposals by each organization. Of course, all of the large well known organizations were immediately approved but local organizations and other international NGO's that are not well known were immediately eliminated as recipients of funding to provide humanitarian assistance." (Survey Participant)

111 At sub-national level, the participation of national and local NGOs in clusters improved over time in Myanmar, where local hubs and an NGO liaison officer created an inclusive environment. This inclusion led to more partnerships with international actors and resulted in a capacity-strengthening effect for local

Good practice: Myanmar, DRC and the oPt

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59   Cf. Cosgrave et al. (2007), p. 53.

organizations. In DRC, access to the Pooled Fund provided incentives for some local NGOs to participate. In the oPt, the Disability Sub-Cluster effectively promoted the approach of a local organization to distributing assistive devices.

112 The private sector remains excluded from clusters in all country studies, even in areas where companies were prominent and visible in contributing to disaster response, such as Myanmar.

Exclusion of the private sector

6.5 A complex interplay between clusters and the speed of response

113 *The effects of the cluster approach on the speed of response are complex and difficult to assess with precision. Elements like the prepositioning of stocks, the creation of standard operating procedures and the clear designation of lead organizations support a timely response. There can, however, also be a tension between the inclusiveness of coordination fora on the ground and the effectiveness of meetings and decision-making.*

114 Clusters at the global level, especially the service clusters Emergency Telecommunications and Logistics, have developed pools of trained staff, prepositioned stocks of supplies and created standard operating procedures. While it was not within the scope of this evaluation to assess the functionality and effectiveness of these preparedness measures, they are designed to speed up humanitarian response to disasters.

Preparedness

115 The clear designation of lead organizations through the cluster approach also means that sector-based coordination mechanisms can be set up more rapidly at the country and sub-national levels. While the initial response to a disaster often draws on area-based coordination, these sector-based coordination mechanisms can take up their work when a larger number of humanitarian actors have arrived on the scene.

Rapid setup of sector-based coordination

116 At the same time, however, these coordination fora at the country and sub-national levels, especially when badly managed and facilitated, can increase the heaviness and unwieldiness of the system and thereby slow it down. Thus, for example, decision-making processes in Chad were so centralized, that it slowed down local response. In Uganda, clusters added to a multiplication of coordination fora and created inefficiencies due to their lack of integration with existing mechanisms. In DRC, full-time cluster coordinators at the national level were far removed from operational coordination tasks and therefore had a tendency to create additional layers of bureaucracy.

Greater unwieldiness

117 The cluster approach creates very important benefits through its inclusiveness. Further strengthening inclusiveness, as recommended by this evaluation, risks making cluster meetings more unwieldy. Clusters should choose their participants

pragmatically and prioritize inclusiveness when managing the tension between inclusiveness and speed. Thus, even in rapid onset emergencies, the proper involvement of national actors is a must.

6.6 Stronger humanitarian identity, but threat to humanitarian principles

118 *Clusters strengthen the humanitarian orientation of actors involved in relief operations. By the same token, they reinforce the split between humanitarian and development actors or activities. In conflict situations, closer integration between different kinds of actors can also threaten the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality.*

119 Many organizations involved in humanitarian assistance also work in development cooperation. Through the introduction of clusters and their link to humanitarian funding mechanisms, these organizations increase their focus on humanitarian activities. Clusters strengthen Humanitarian Country Teams or their equivalents and the identity of their members as humanitarians. This can be clearly observed in the oPt. On the one hand, this effect is positive because it increases the number of actors working in and resources available for humanitarian aid and spreads the humanitarian way of operating. The effect's negative traits include emphasis on a short-term focus and possible de-politicization of situations, such as in the oPt. It also exacerbates the split between humanitarian and development activities and fora.

Clusters strengthen humanitarian identity

120 In certain situations, clusters also risk undermining humanitarian principles. When it is no longer voluntary, closer cooperation threatens to undermine independence, neutrality and impartiality for example when humanitarian organizations are financially dependent on clusters or their lead agencies, or when clusters or their leads have close links to integrated missions, peacekeeping operations, governments or other actors that are parties to the conflict.[60] Many humanitarian actors consider it inappropriate to pass information relating to the situation and protection issues to actors involved in the conflict. This can occur, for example, because the representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights who participates in Protection Cluster meetings simultaneously serves as head of human rights components in peace missions. While this can improve the information flow between different actors, the threat posed by these situations to humanitarian principles has been an important concern for a number of NGOs and other humanitarian organizations.[61] It has deterred their active participation in the cluster approach, especially in highly politicized contexts such as Chad, Somalia or Afghanistan. In Haiti, for example, the ICRC withdrew from the Protection

Potential threat to humanitarian principles

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60 Cf. for example Oxfam Briefing Paper, "Missing pieces? Assessing the impact of humanitarian reform in Pakistan", 1 October 2009.
61 Cf. for example Pouligny (2004), Derderian et al. (2007) and ICVA (2006).

Cluster because of its link to the peacekeeping mission. This risk has also been recognized by some UN agencies, including UNHCR[62] and the Protection Cluster Working Group, which determine their form and level of integration based on an analysis of the situation at hand.

121 A new website collecting relevant information on humanitarian response, including on the cluster approach, is entitled "oneresponse". Many NGOs and other humanitarian actors fear that this title betrays an intention to create a uniform humanitarian system controlled by UN agencies. Giving the website a different title, such as "collaborative response", would allay much of this concern.

Concerns about the "oneresponse" website

6.7 Stronger ability of the humanitarian system to learn

122 Finally, and significantly, clusters help the humanitarian system to identify and implement lessons and could further increase this effect.

123 Evidence for this effect includes the following factors:

- Clusters have strengthened peer accountability (cf. section 5.2) and offer a platform for exchanging good practices.

- While clusters are often unable to directly resolve key problems in humanitarian assistance, such as problems of institutional memory, insufficient links between humanitarian and development activities and contradictions between status- and needs-based approaches, they focus attention on these problems and thereby increase the pressure to address them.

- The cluster approach itself has evolved significantly since its introduction in 2005 and thus demonstrated its ability to learn.

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62 Cf. For example Tennant, "UNHCR's engagement with integrated UN missions. Report of a lessons learned workshop", August 2009

7 Implications for the logic model of the cluster approach

124 In the run-up to this evaluation, a "logic model" for the cluster approach was developed, showing intended inputs, processes and outputs, outcomes, intermediate effects and long-term impact (see illustration 3). The evaluation team used this model as the basis for developing indicators to assess the performance of clusters at country level.[63]

Illustration 3
The original logic model[64]
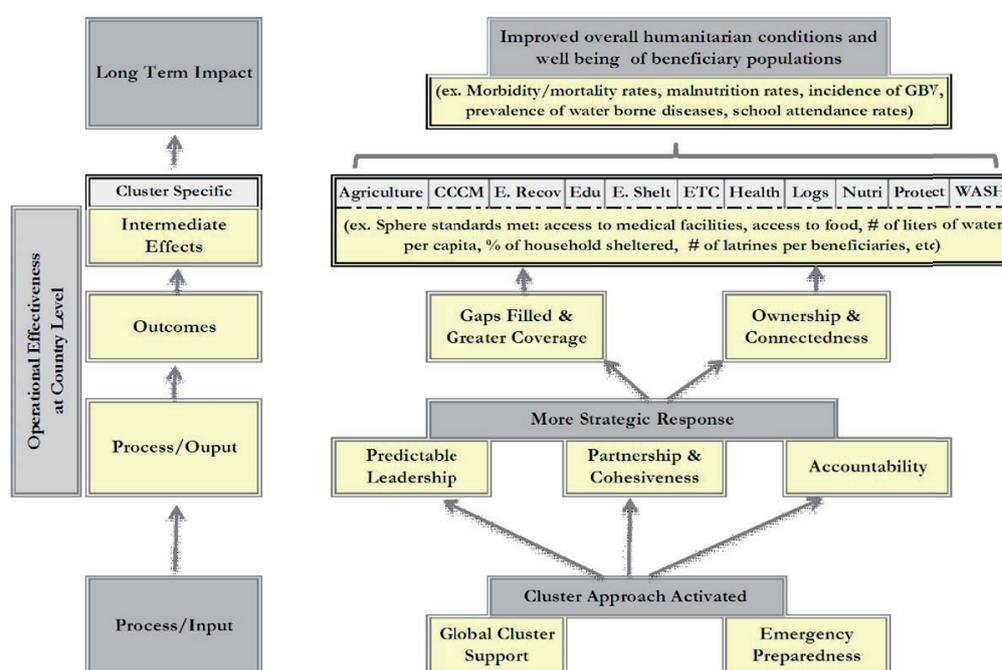
125 The analysis of the cluster approach's implementation on the ground revealed that several aspects of the logic model had evolved since its introduction and that local practice often went beyond the model. To illustrate these differences, as well as the future potential of the cluster approach as identified through the evaluation, the evaluation team has sketched the rough contours of a "practice model" (see illustration 4). While this sketch is certainly not complete and will further evolve in the future, the evaluation team hopes that it can contribute to a better understanding of the cluster approach and help guide its practical implementation.

*From a logic to a practice model*

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63 See country reports, available at [to be completed]
64 From Alexander (2009)

126 The "practice model" contains almost all elements of the "logic model" and contains the following main differences:

- *The model centers on the affected population.* The first part of the "practice model" illustrates the ultimate goal of the cluster approach, namely to improve the situation and enhance the dignity of the affected population. At the same time, it puts the cluster approach in perspective by showing which other actors contribute to that goal.

- *It contains a broader set of inputs* and includes global cluster support and emergency preparedness, as well as predictable leadership, guidance, staff time, the willingness of other actors to participate and share information and the existence of an information management system.

- *It includes a description of key characteristics of the coordination(+)* platform and makes clear that this platform is the main mechanism through which the cluster approach seeks to improve humanitarian response.

- *It focuses on cluster activities,* rather than outputs, to provide clearer guidance on what clusters should do.

- *It includes a clear focus on cross-cutting issues.*

- *It includes negative external factors* that can prevent these activities from contributing effectively to the desired effects.

- *It correlates more clearly which activities contribute to which effects* to enhance the logic of the model.

- *It contains a broader set of effects* relating to the quality of humanitarian assistance.

- *It assigns ownership a different place* in cluster coordination. The evaluation found that an international coordination approach tends to undermine, rather than promote national ownership. Instead of portraying ownership as a goal of the cluster approach, the "practice model" therefore describes the inclusion of authorities (where appropriate) as an important characteristic of the coordination(+) platform and the creation of links to the government as one of the platform's activities.

- *It re-conceptualizes accountability* as accountability to the affected population and peer accountability.

Illustration 4
Contours of a "practice model"

Responsibility of the affected state

Responsibility of the political actors

Presence, capacity and responsibility of development actors

WELL BEING OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION

Responsibility of donors (collective and individual)

Individual responsibility of humanitarian agencies

Collective responsibility of humanitarian actors

area zoomed in
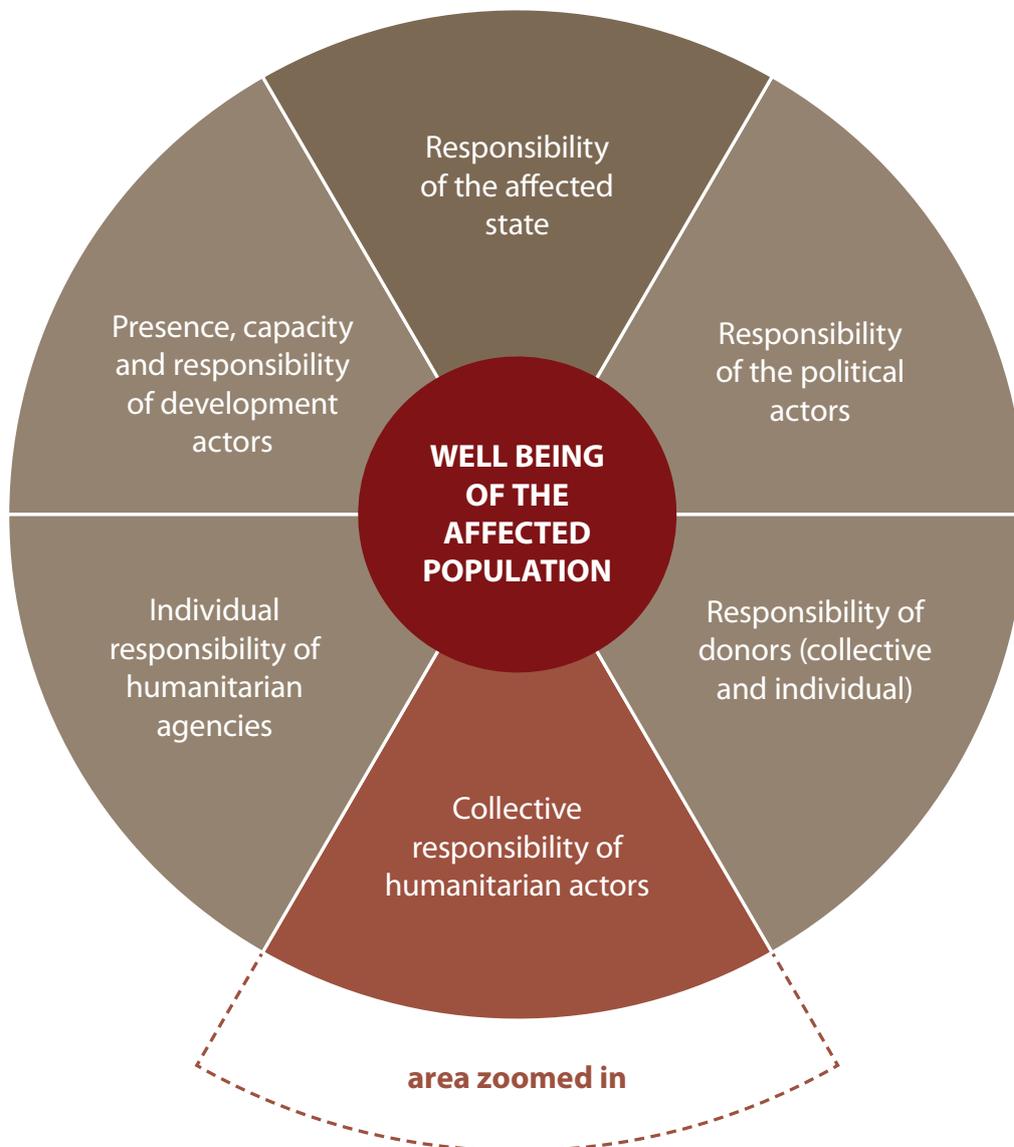
WELL BEING OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION

EFFECTS

| Better geographic and thematic coverage & greater efficiency | Better technical response, including attention to cross-cutting issues and multi-dimensional issues | Better preparedness, and connectedness to development | Stronger capacity of national actors | More accountability to affected population |

EXTERNAL FACTORS

access to affected areas, access to funding (incl. for cross-cutting issues and development)

ACTIVITIES OF THE COORDINATION(+) PLATFORM

| Identify and prioritize gaps and avoid duplications through coordinated needs assessments and information sharing | Avoid operational incoherencies; clarify, adapt and disseminate relevant standards and lessons learnt, strengthen peer accountability, promote cross-cutting issues and engage in inter-sectoral coordination | Define exit strategies and preparedness plans | Link to development actors and governments and build local capacity | Promote and use participatory approaches |

COORDINATION(+) PLATFORM

Includes UN, INGOs, local NGOs, authorities
Includes sectoral and inter-sectoral fora
Respects Principles of Partnership and humanitarian principles
Includes appropriate links to donors and funding mechanisms
Links to / builds on / supports existing coordination fora
Uses good facilitation techniques and tools and is action-oriented

INPUTS

provided by IASC, global clusters, OCHA, cluster lead organizations, cluster members

| Predictable leadership & preparedness | Guidance | Global cluster support | Staff time | Willingness to participate & share information | Information management system |

8 Conclusions

127 There has been much ado about the cluster approach since its formal introduction in 2005. Significant resources have been invested at the global, as well as country levels. Coordinator positions have been created and coordination experts have been trained at the global level. Important efforts have been made to clarify what the goals of the cluster approach are and how it is meant to function and to overcome many humanitarian organizations' initially intense skepticism. Clusters have created guidelines, manuals, tools, strategies and work plans, as well as in some cases pre-positioned stockpiles. Staff members of UN agencies, NGOs and other organizations have invested significant amounts of their time in meetings and other cluster-related activities. From the bottom-up, OCHA has tried to define its role within the cluster approach and found many different ways of engaging with and supporting clusters. Evaluations have analyzed the cluster approach as a whole, the position of specific stakeholders towards it, as well as the operations of individual clusters.

128 The critical question therefore is: Has it been worth it? The table below presents a summary of resources invested in the cluster approach, benefits and improvements the cluster approach has contributed to in the context of humanitarian reform, as well as current shortcomings of and challenges faced by the cluster approach. It is also important to note that the direct financial costs of coordination are borne by donors, whereas the costs resulting from the absence of coordination would be imposed on affected populations.

Table 3
Current costs, benefits, shortcomings and challenges related to the implementation of the cluster approach

Costs of the cluster approach	
· Financial cost (over $ 57 million through global appeals; contributions from the core budgets of global cluster lead organizations; significant resources at country level; the sum amounting to less than 1% of total humanitarian aid)[65] · Time invested by cluster coordinators and cluster members in participation, preparation, information sharing etc.[66]	Costs

Functioning of the clusters	
Current benefits and improvements	**Current shortcomings and challenges**
Stronger predictability and degree of leadership **§ 22 ff**	Variations in mainstreaming leadership role lead to inefficiencies in cluster coordination meetings, lack of focus and risk of bureaucratization **§ 23 ff**
Provision of global surge capacities, trainings, learning exercises and handbooks **§ 31**	Notice at country level of global support remains relatively low **§ 29 ff**
Coordination within clusters in most cases improved compared to earlier systems **§ 44**	Weak inter-cluster coordination is largely ineffective at organizing a response to multi-dimensional issues **§ 36 ff**
Interactions between clusters and financing mechanisms to date are mostly strongly positive **§ 50ff**	Coordination between the cluster approach and existing coordination mechanisms in country remains largely insufficient and sometimes leads to a multiplication of coordination mechanisms **§ 44 ff**
Clusters support CAPs and Flash Appeals and lead to improved planning processes **§ 52**	Negative examples highlight important risks when clusters and funding mechanisms are too closely intertwined **§ 50 ff**

The right-margin labels for the table: "Costs", "Benefits and improvements vs. shortcomings or challenges to date".

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65 The global appeals covered the period between April 2006 and March 2008. They focused on capacity building at the global level, especially the training of staff, the creation of stockpiles and the development of standards, guidelines, systems and tools. The global appeals amounted to an average of 0.74% of total humanitarian aid in 2006 and 2007. In-country, humanitarian actors in oPt, for example, received over $ 4.6 million in 2009 for cluster coordination and clusters in DRC have included about $ 470,000 per cluster in the 2010 appeal. In both cases, this corresponds to a little over 0.6% of humanitarian aid received by the country (source for financial data: Financial Tracking Service).

66 It is impossible to quantify the time spent on coordination with precision. Individuals regularly attending representing their organizations in one or more clusters typically stated that they spend around 25% of their time on coordination.

Direct results and activities	
Current benefits and improvements	**Current shortcomings and challenges**
Stronger partnership between UN and INGOs and among INGOs § 59	Risks to partnership arise where clusters take an active role in deciding about the allocation of resources and where clusters are too closely associated with peacekeeping forces or political actors involved in the conflict § 59 ff
Designated space for information sharing and dissemination, which leads to an improved understanding of the humanitarian situation § 70 ff	Information management and institutional memory remain a big problem § 70 ff
Better sharing of the results of needs assessments § 74 ff Greater coherence in several important operational operational issue areas and increased adaption, development and dissemination of standards § 80ff Enhanced advocacy power of humanitarian actors § 61 Enhanced capacity of the humanitarian system to learn through peer accountability, more technical and normative discussions at field level and by highlighting existing problems § 64 ff, § 122	Clusters do not use their potential to improve assessment methods § 74 ff
Effects	
Current benefits and improvements	**Current shortcomings and challenges**
Better identification of gaps, reduction of duplications § 89 ff	Limited overall effect on coverage, clusters by design can address only some causes for gaps § 89 ff
Increased coverage of thematic issues (e.g. GBV and child protection) § 93	Limited integration of cross-cutting issues § 96 ff

Better coordinated international humanitarian actors at country level, which can facilitate contacts between national authorities and international actors. § 106 ff	To date, national and local actors are not adequately included in most clusters. Clusters therefore often undermine national ownership and weaken existing coordination structures and capacities § 106 ff
More rapid set-up of sector-based coordination § 115	Greater unwieldiness of the system and in some cases, slower response § 116 f Very little participation of affected populations § 101 ff Reinforced split between humanitarian and development actors and activities, sometimes de-politicization of approaches and situations § 118 ff
Strengthened humanitarian identity, mobilizing more actors and resources § 118 ff	Threat to humanitarian principles in cases of financial dependence, links to peacekeeping operations or governments that are parties to the conflict § 120
Enhanced capacity for national and local NGOs, in the rare cases where they participate in clusters § 110 ff	Marginal participation of national and local NGOs, the private sector and foundations § 110 ff

129 Concerning its future implementation, the cluster approach holds an important potential, but also faces a number of risks that are summarized in table 4.

Table 4
Future potential benefits and risks

Potential future benefits of the cluster approach	Potential future risks of the cluster approach
More effective link with financing mechanisms enabling better coverage	Exceedingly close links with financing mechanisms risk creating tensions among cluster members, diverting attention away from coordination and encouraging 'political' allocation decisions
Greater inclusiveness, especially of national and local NGOs, leading to capacity-strengthening, better needs assessments and better response	Greater inclusiveness risks undermining the effectiveness of meetings and the speed of response if meetings are not well managed
Stronger reliance on local or long-term international staff as coordinators, leading to capacity building	Stronger involvement of local staff can lead to conflicts of interest and create security risks for these individuals Excessive integration can undermine humanitarian space, reduce diversity, hinder innovation and lead individual organizations to abdicate responsibility
Coordination[(+)] platform used to a) strengthen focus on early recovery and other cross-cutting issues; b) facilitate creative debate on innovation; c) promote and use participatory approaches and further accountability to affected populations; d) coordinate needs and capacity assessments; e) stronger use peer reviews and accountability mechanisms as well as disseminate good practice Effective inter-cluster coordination, focusing on identifying and addressing multi-disciplinary issues and inter-cluster gaps, helping with a strategic common response to priority gaps Better links with and to development actors	Peer control and / or rigid hierarchical command and control by cluster lead organization

130 The introduction of the cluster approach is an organizational change process that requires up-front investments and generates benefits over time. Five years into that process and based on largely qualitative evidence collected in six countries, the evaluation team concludes that these investments are beginning to pay off as the benefits generated by the cluster approach to date already slightly outweigh its costs and shortcomings. It is also important to note that the direct financial costs of

Conclusion:
Investments are beginning
to pay off as current benefits
already slightly outweigh
costs and shortcomings

coordination are borne by donors and agencies, whereas the costs resulting from the absence of coordination would be imposed on affected countries and populations. Moreover, there is hardly any fundamental or principled opposition to the cluster approach among humanitarian actors anymore. Provided that improvements are made, the approach has significant potential for further improving humanitarian response and thereby enhancing the well-being of affected populations. This potential justifies further efforts and investments to improve and strengthen the implementation of the cluster approach.

131 Beyond this overall assessment, several key issues emerged during the evaluation:

132 The limits of coordination. The ultimate goal of the cluster approach is to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response.[67] Clusters can strengthen the quality of humanitarian assistance through a variety of mechanisms, including for example improved information sharing, the organization of a coordinated (not necessarily joint) response to priority gaps, joint advocacy and enhanced learning. Better coordination, however, does not automatically lead to a better situation of the affected population:

- Creating a coordination(+) platform does not automatically deliver the elements that can improve humanitarian response. Instead, it takes a conscious effort to move for example from sharing information to identifying and prioritizing gaps to organizing a common response or to move from meetings to joint learning.

- Coordination is not a magic bullet for improving response. It also requires available funding, access to affected populations and quality approaches and services of individual organizations. The cluster approach can therefore not be seen in isolation and needs to be regarded as one of several elements for improving the quality of humanitarian assistance.

133 *The importance and impossibility of a genuine provider of last resort role.* Humanitarian reform and the cluster approach were developed to cover priority gaps in humanitarian response and ensure that all basic needs in emergencies are covered. The concept of provider of last resort - in the original sense of organizations committing their own budgets or stocks to fill gaps if need be - is central to this goal: It makes lead organizations responsible and accountable for ensuring that needs in their sectors are covered. Since it is unrealistic to expect single organizations to fill all gaps in their area, an IASC guidance note clarifies that lead organizations have to do their utmost to try to fill gaps and, if necessary, advocate for additional

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67 Cf. http://humanitarianreform.org

resources. In practice, most lead organizations adopt this latter part of their responsibility and act as "advocates of last resort". While acknowledging these constraints, it is important not to lose sight of the original meaning of the concept of provider of last resort for the further development of the cluster approach. Its implementation would be more realistic if all lead organizations had flexible internal emergency budget lines or pre-positioned emergency stocks or if clusters could draw more systematically on global and country-level pooled funds to strategically fill identified priority gaps.[68]

134 *Systemic obstacles to the functioning of the Early Recovery and Protection Clusters.* The performance of individual clusters varies significantly within and among countries.[69] Irrespective of their efforts to address the issues mentioned in chapters 4-6, however, the Early Recovery Cluster and the Protection Cluster (the main cluster, not necessarily its sub-clusters) face systemic challenges that hamper their ability to work effectively:

- *Mandate problems.* Both clusters are systematically caught up in time-consuming and often irresolvable debates concerning their scope and mandate. In the case of protection, the global Protection Cluster Working Group developed a common definition of protection. Despite this effort, humanitarian actors at country and local levels work with different and conflicting definitions and modes of action (ranging from advocacy to military intervention) concerning protection due to differences in their mandates and experiences. As a result, disagreements on which issues the Protection Cluster should deal with are often inevitable and cluster members return to the debate of what is protection over and over again. For early recovery,[70] broad agreement exists on early recovery as a crucial cross-cutting issue requiring increased mainstreaming efforts. At country and sub-national level, however, early recovery is also often implemented as a cluster addressing gaps left by the other clusters, such as governance, livelihoods, environment, infrastructure etc. The cluster activities have tended to deflect attention away from the advisory role on early recovery. Moreover, addressing the resulting laundry list of gap issues through a cluster rather than specific ad hoc task forces is difficult because they can involve very different actors depending on the issue, can create overlaps with the work of other clusters and raise questions concerning the mandate of the Early Recovery Cluster.

- *Lack of expertise.* The mandate problems in Early Recovery and Protection are exacerbated by the fact that few other actors at field level have relevant knowledge and expertise relating to these issues.

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68   Cf. Cosgrave at al. (2007), p. 40
69   Cf. overview of cluster performance ratings in Annex 2.
70   For an overview of conceptual problems relating to early recovery, see for example Bailey and Pavanello (2009).

- *Political issues.* Both clusters are also confronted with political issues. Information relating to protection, for example, is highly sensitive. Humanitarian actors are therefore often reluctant to share relevant information, especially when representatives of the military participate in meetings and when the Protection Cluster lead organization has close links to peacekeeping missions or UN missions with a political mandate. This is despite the fact that UNHCR as cluster lead organization has internal data protection and confidentiality guidelines. Similar issues can arise in the context of the Early Recovery Cluster, when UNDP as cluster lead organization has strong links to governments that are actively involved in conflicts or to integrated missions and peacekeeping forces.

135 *The need for a Food Security Cluster.* With an increasing overlap or convergence between the mandates of the leading organizations in food aid and agriculture, WFP and FAO, the option of creating a Food Security Cluster has been hotly debated at the global level for some time. Evidence from the country case studies conducted for this evaluation suggests that such a cluster integrating the Agriculture Cluster should be created. In several countries (Uganda and DRC, as well as potentially Chad), combined clusters were created for food security and agricultural livelihoods with very positive results. In countries where clusters for food aid and agriculture existed side-by-side, by contrast, serious implementation problems emerged (e.g. in Haiti and Myanmar). A merger of food and agriculture issues can help strengthen the early recovery perspective of local food aid clusters.

Food/Agriculture

136 *Institutional problems of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster.* The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster has a tripartite leadership arrangement between OCHA (process owner), WFP (security telecommunications) and UNICEF (data transmission), which has led to confusion.[71] Moreover, the cluster has increasingly interpreted its role as that of a "provider of first resort" with WFP raising funds and providing equipment as the default option. While the quick provision of services has been helpful in some contexts, it has exacerbated tensions in the global cluster as it has been perceived as leading to a duplication of efforts.[72]

ETC

137 The experiences with the cluster approach demonstrate that reforms implemented mainly by improving means and processes cannot address more fundamental issues, such as a lack of expertise or institutional turf wars and cannot replace essential political decisions.

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71 Similarly, phase 1 of the evaluation found that "the current [tripartite] leadership model constitutes a problem". Stoddard, Harmer et al (2007), p. 31.

72 Cf. Emergency Telecommunications Cluster meeting minutes, 9/10/2009, Geneva.

138 *The cluster approach as an organizational change process.* The introduction of the cluster approach is not just a technical issue. It "is now becoming simply the way we do business."[73] It is important to acknowledge that (inter-) organizational change processes, like the introduction of the cluster approach, are bound to encounter resistance and can only develop slowly over time. Reforms can also evolve and adapt as they are tested and confronted with field reality. The cluster approach is no exception and should therefore be given sufficient time to mature and evolve. Still, clusters should not become an end in themselves, but re-focus on their original mission of improving humanitarian response, for which they should draw more consciously on their strengths and existing good practice.

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73 Holmes (2007), p. 5.

9 Recommendations

139 To further improve the implementation of the cluster approach, the evaluation team suggests the following recommendations. The recommendations are organized in six thematic groups and recommendations within these groups are listed in order of priority.

Recommendation 1
Identify existing preparedness, response and coordination mechanisms and capacities and link with/support/complement them where appropriate

To strengthen timeliness, preparedness, linking with development and supporting the sustainability of humanitarian relief operations, clusters, depending on context, should be more closely linked to national actors, other coordination mechanisms and longer-term development projects.

Concrete steps

1 *Conduct an analysis of the context, as well as existing coordination and response mechanisms and capacities,* especially of local and national actors, before implementing clusters in any given crisis or country. Design clusters so that they link with, support or integrate with existing mechanisms where appropriate. In case of sudden-onset disasters, ensure appropriate links with rapid response mechanisms, including national mechanisms and the UNDAC system.
   » **Humanitarian Country Team, OCHA, Clusters at national and field level**

2 *Identify appropriate partners in national and local authorities* and develop strategies for strengthening their capacities and involving them in the cluster approach, such as joint trainings, holding meetings at the government's offices or using communication strategies that allow national actors to participate. In doing so, implement the forthcoming IASC guidance on working with national authorities.
   » **Clusters at national and field level, OCHA**

   ⭐ Good practice § 109

3 *Strengthen cooperation and coordination between clusters, national actors and development actors at every stage from preparedness to response and the transition to development.* To do so, contingency plans should be shared between national and international actors. Joint simulation exercises and trainings should be held.[74] Mechanisms for bridging the funding gap between humanitarian and development activities, including the provision of resources for early recovery, should be developed.

   ⭐ Good practice § 46

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74 This and the following recommendations are supported by numerous reports and studies, including Street and Parihar (2007), Global Nutrition Cluster (2007), ALNAP (2006b), Oxfam International (2009) or Harvey (2009).

Furthermore, appropriate links between cluster activities and plan and related processes, such as Post-Disaster and Post-Conflict Needs Assessments, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and National Development Plans, should be established.

» **Clusters at national and field level, National Authorities, Development Actors, Donors, OCHA**

Recommendation 2
Strengthen cluster management and implementation modalities

Clusters should seek to become more effective and efficient in their operations by improving their management and implementation modalities.

Concrete steps

1 *Continue to strengthen the "mainstreaming" of cluster responsibilities* in cluster lead organizations by drawing on and implementing the work of the IASC task team on mainstreaming.
   » **Global Cluster Lead Organizations**

2 *Clarify, recognize and strengthen the role of OCHA.* The country studies have shown that OCHA is crucial at field and national levels for implementing an effective cluster approach, e.g. through its functions in information and knowledge management, its role in promoting inter-cluster coordination and its potential role in hosting advisors on cross-cutting issues and facilitation trainers. OCHA should define its role in relation to the cluster approach more clearly and in doing so draw on good practice developed in different countries. Member states and OCHA's donor support group should recognize this critical role and, where necessary, provide OCHA with the necessary mandate and resources for fulfilling it.
   » **OCHA, Member States, OCHA Donor Support Group**

⭐ Good practice § 42

3 *Strengthen the role of Humanitarian Coordinators in the cluster approach.* Humanitarian Coordinators should play a more active role in the cluster approach, providing more feedback and guidance on cluster operations and facilitating strategic inter-cluster coordination. Thus, Humanitarian Coordinators should ensure that Humanitarian Country Teams are not only inter-agency, but also inter-cluster meetings and identify and address strategic inter-cluster gaps and overlaps. This hould be supported through general steps for strengthening the exercise of the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator.
   » **Humanitarian Coordinators, IASC**

⭐ Good practice § 66

4 *Define clear roles and responsibilities for different meetings and fora and ensure that clusters are adequately represented at the strategic level, at both the global and the country levels.* Strategic coordination meetings such as Humanitarian Country Teams and the IASC should be strengthened and play an explicit role in inter-cluster, rather than only inter-agency, coordination. This requires an adequate representation of clusters in these meetings, for example through well briefed heads of agencies or through the inclusion of elected cluster members.

⭐ Good practice § 42

» **Humanitarian Country Teams, IASC, Cluster Lead Organizations**

5 *Reinforce the role of international NGOs in clusters.*[75] The active participation of NGOs in the cluster system is crucial because effective coordination requires broad participation, because NGOs, especially if they act as co-leads or co-facilitators, enhance the legitimacy of clusters, facilitate outreach and communication, at times have valuable experiences with participatory approaches and working with local partners and because they can be strong advocates for the protection of humanitarian space. International NGOs should therefore actively claim their space within the cluster approach and enhance their readiness to act as cluster co-leads and co-facilitators. As part of this, they should include related capacity building costs in their plans and budgets. The IASC should clarify the roles and responsibilities of co-lead and co-facilitator organizations at national and sub-national levels and finalize relevant guidance. Donors should ensure NGOs receive adequate support for their coordination activities.[76]

» **NGOs, IASC, Donors**

6 *Clarify the criteria, processes and terminology for cluster implementation, transition and exit.* The decision-processes should be driven by Humanitarian Country Teams and include national authorities. Decisions need to take into account context-specificities such as crisis situation (preparedness, sudden-onset emergency, protracted crisis) and existing coordination mechanisms and differentiate between service and operational clusters. The process should encourage the early and proactive development of scenarios and exit strategies and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should finalize its guidance on the issue.

⭐ Good practice § 27

» **Humanitarian Country Teams, Humanitarian Coordinator, National Authorities, Emergency Response Coordinator, IASC**

7 *Provide cluster coordinators with one standard, basic cluster management handbook or tool kit,* including relevant IASC guidance documents, information sharing and management tools, sample terms of reference, agendas, meeting minutes, work plans, prioritization exercises and instructions on facilitation techniques, taking

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75   See recommendation 3 on national and local NGOs.

76   For further details on the role of NGOs in humanitarian reform, see for instance the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project at http://www.icva.ch/ngosandhumanitarianreform.html (accessed April 2010).

into account relevant resources that have already been developed, including cluster management handbooks developed by individual clusters, training materials developed by the Cluster/Sector Lead Training Program and relevant management literature.[77]

» **OCHA together with Global Cluster Lead Organizations and Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues**

8 *Ensure that cluster coordinators, especially at sub-national level, have sufficient time and adequate skills* to fulfill their responsibilities. Cluster coordination should always be a substantial part of the terms of reference of the coordinator and should not be put on top of a fulltime position. The skills needed include management skills, facilitation skills, decision-making skills, consensus-building capacities, communication and networking skills, as well as an understanding of the local context. 80 percent of potential cluster coordinators should get access to training within the next two years, for example through mainstreaming cluster coordination into standard management trainings within the cluster lead organizations or specific global or local cluster trainings. Training programs need to be reviewed in terms of content and participants. This review should include feedback from successful country cluster coordinators. Lead agencies also need to evaluate whether trained staff are deployed as coordinators.

» **Cluster Lead Organizations at global and country level, Humanitarian Coordinator**

9 *Improve information sharing and management* by and among clusters, e.g. by using simple and creative methods for sharing information to free up meeting time; creating more cluster-specific systems for identifying duplications; expanding the "Who does What Where" by including the status of projects; expanding the practice of having a cluster website and managing it, as well as the use of local Google Groups or similar platforms; and ensuring data quality and consistency over time. For the implementation of these steps, the respective roles of cluster lead organizations, especially those of "meta-clusters" and OCHA need to be further clarified. Cluster lead organizations need to have proper information management capacities and OCHA needs to ensure the compatibility of information management systems through the provision of templates and standards for information sharing. The Humanitarian Coordinator should hold cluster lead agencies and OCHA accountable for the timely delivery of relevant information.

⭐ Good practice § 71

» **OCHA, Cluster Lead Organizations at country and field level, Humanitarian Coordinators**

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77 See for example Lencioni (2004).

Recommendation 3
Enhance the focus on strengthening the quality of humanitarian response in cluster operations and activities

Clusters should capitalize on their strengths and maximize their contribution to improving humanitarian response by strengthening their focus on enhancing quality.

Concrete steps

1 *Ensure that clusters have a clear, operational focus* and integrate relevant cross-cutting issues in their analysis and activities. Clusters should engage in analyzing and prioritizing gaps and organizing a coherent response to them, based on the diversity of operational capacity and expertise of cluster members. This also requires streamlining requests for information made by OCHA, cluster lead organizations and other actors, as clusters should not be used to substitute for weak UN reporting mechanisms.
   » **At country and field level: Clusters, Cluster Lead Organizations,**
    Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues, Thematic Groups on Cross-Cutting Issues, OCHA

2 *As a contribution to creating more accountability to affected populations, strengthen the role of clusters in using and promoting participatory approaches.* Clusters should better communicate to affected populations using context-sensitive communication strategies and appropriate technologies, such as SMS or the tools employed by the Communication to Disaster Affected Communities initiative after the recent earthquake in Haiti.[78] To enhance downward accountability, clusters could for example create complaints mechanisms; use participatory methods to validate action plans and prioritize activities, where appropriate working through associations of affected people, especially where social stigma may prevent direct participation; apply community-generated indicators and involve communities in monitoring the response. To enhance the use of participatory methods among cluster members, they could disseminate participatory methods, for example through trainings by NGOs with experience in applying these methods; facilitate learning exercises on participatory approaches; or promote participatory needs assessments through peer review processes.
   » **Clusters at country and field level, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues**

⭐ Good practice § 103

3 *Facilitate the participation of national and local NGOs and strengthen their capacities,* drawing of the strength of clusters in creating inclusive fora and facilitating learning. To do so, include national and local NGOs in management and strategy development. Explore options for encouraging their participation, for example by developing more proactive and creative communication and

⭐ Good practice § 111

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78 Cf. also the recent Oxfam report (Oxfam International, 2009, p. 3).

"outreach" strategies, building translation costs into coordination budgets, holding meetings in local languages, ensuring that more staff members have an appropriate understanding of the context and knowledge of the local situation, engaging NGO liaison officers focusing on national and local NGOs, facilitating internet access for local NGOs and enabling their participation in meetings by considering meeting locations, transport time and cost and security protocols for local NGOs.

» **Clusters at country and field level**

4 *Further strengthen the role of clusters in defining, adapting, using and promoting relevant standards.* To strengthen compliance, clusters should develop mechanisms for monitoring the quality of humanitarian response and its impact on affected populations and better define and enforce accountability within the humanitarian system.

» **Clusters at global, country and field level, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues**

5 *Engage clusters in coordinating and improving needs assessments.* This implies to i) ensure that local actors are involved in assessments; ii) encourage cluster members to conduct a holistic diagnosis, including not only needs, but also capacity, asset and constraints analysis; iii) ensure that assessments, as well as other stages of response, contain sex and age disaggregated data; iv) minimize duplications of assessments and create a division of labor; v) facilitate discussions on assessment data with all cluster members, national and local actors and members of other related clusters to help rationalize data from different information sources; vi) explore mobile needs and response assessment and mapping methods;[79] vii) promote peer review and mutual learning on assessment methods; viii) where relevant, agree on indicators that are relevant to most actors and coordinate the organization of assessments, building for example on the Initial Rapid Assessment tool or sets of indicators defined at the global level, such as the ones of the Global Health Cluster; ix)consider the contribution of clusters to conducting Emergency Needs Assessments, drawing on the work of the recently established IASC Task Force on Needs Assessments.

» **Clusters at global, country and field level, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues**

6 *Ensure integration of cross-cutting issues in assessments, policies, tools, training, guidance, strategic planning and operations.* This requires to i) ensure that sufficient strategic and technical advisory capacities exist, e.g. by identifying local focal points and facilitating their participation in clusters, providing training on cross-cutting

⭐ Good practice § 98

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79 Web-based and mobile technologies currently used in disaster response include for example SAHANA (http://sahana.lk), USHAHIDI (http://www.ushahidi.com), FRONTLINE SMS (http://www.frontlinesms.com), THE EXTRAORDINARIES (http://www.beextra.org) and InSTEDD (http://ndt.instedd.org). For debates on the usefulness of these platforms and tools, see for example the blogs maintained on each of these sites or http://mobileactive.org/.

issues, developing additional surge capacity, including experts on cross-cutting issues on missions where relevant and ensuring that surge capacity is used in an advisory role; ii) include the integration of cross-cutting issues in funding strategies; iii) prioritize the advisory function over cluster activities for cross-cutting issues; iv) ensure that focal points for all relevant cross-cutting issues are strategically engaged in developing strategies and work plans and reviewing the work of clusters and their members; v) ensure that cluster lead organizations accept and fulfill their leadership roles with respect to cross-cutting issues, for example through requesting surge capacity or training cluster coordinators in cross-cutting issues; vi) clarify the roles and responsibilities of focal points for cross-cutting issues, cluster lead organizations and OCHA in the promotion of cross-cutting issues, with OCHA assuming responsibility for ensuring that this task is fulfilled; vii) and review and revise the list of cross-cutting issues as relevant cross-cutting issues vary from situation to situation and include e.g. early recovery, protection, disability, human rights, disaster risk reduction and psycho-social support as cross-cutting issues.

» **IASC, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues, Thematic Groups on Cross-Cutting Issues, Early Recovery Cluster**

7 *Improve mechanisms to deal with multidisciplinary issues and inter-cluster gaps* by facilitating a joint identification of these issues and gaps through inter-cluster coordination and forming thematic working groups with clear terms of reference and exit strategies following the model of the rubble removal task force in Haiti or the thematic working groups in the West Bank. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) should finalize its guidance on inter-cluster coordination and clearly define and delimited the roles in inter-cluster coordination of "meta-clusters" relative to OCHA and reinforce OCHA's mandate for inter-cluster coordination. (s. also recommendation 4)

» **OCHA, Early Recovery Advisory, IASC**

8 *Further strengthen learning,* especially after the end of the acute emergency phase. To achieve this, organize regular lessons learned exercises within clusters and update cluster terms of reference accordingly. Hold regular discussions between cluster coordinators, cluster lead organizations and the Humanitarian Coordinator on strengths and weaknesses. Enhance peer accountability mechanisms, for example by including peer accountability into the terms of reference for clusters and cluster coordinators, institutionalizing peer review mechanisms for major funding proposals and needs assessment and following-up more systematically on agreed action points. Conduct joint project visits. Encourage evaluations, especially real time evaluations and evaluations among NGOs and NGO consortia.

★ Good practice § 68

» **Clusters at global, country and field level, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues, Humanitarian Coordinator**

Recommendation 4
Increase the focus of resources for the cluster approach on the local level

In the first few years after the cluster approach was introduced, actors focused their resources on the global level first, the national level second and on the local level last. As the cluster approach matures, this order of priorities has started to change and should be reversed especially for operational clusters to ensure that cluster coordination has more operational relevance and fits local circumstances.

Concrete steps

1 *Strengthen training on facilitation, coordination and cross-cutting issues on the national and sub-national levels* and implement train the trainers programs at the global level (as currently considered for example by the Emergency Shelter Cluster). In protracted crises and as part of strengthening preparedness, use these trainers as coaches for long-term international or local staff in country of UN, NGO and national institutions. Update, disseminate and use materials of the discontinued global Cluster/Sector Lead Training Program at country level.[80] Reduce the loss of institutional memory by standardizing e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for cluster coordination positions and by defining clear requirements in terms of references to hand over relevant information before departure. For protracted crises, define a minimum duration for cluster coordinator deployments of at least six months. And seek to extend deployments in sudden-onset emergencies as long as possible.
  » **Global Clusters, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues, OCHA**

⭐ Good practice § 30

2 *Provide dedicated part-time or full-time coordination capacities for sub-national clusters* or those levels where operational coordination takes place. Seek to include the costs for sub-national facilitation and coordination into national cluster coordination budgets.
  » **Donors, Cluster Lead Organizations at global and country level**

3 *Create reporting lines between global and national clusters and ensure that national clusters support local ones.* Ensure that global clusters actively explain which global tools and services are available and adopt a "service mentality" towards the national and local level, drawing for example on the Service Mindset Training of the Logistics Cluster. Ensure that national clusters identify

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80 The Cluster/Sector Lead Training Program (CSLT) was delivered in 2007 to provide targeted training to cluster coordinators on the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to effectively lead cluster groups at the field level. A useful training session on meeting management with Tip Sheets is accessible at http://www.humanitarianreform.org.

demands from the local level and become more active in providing mentoring and training. National cluster coordinators should have clearly assigned periods to be spent in the "field".

» **Clusters at global and country level**

4   *Define decision-making procedures between national and sub-national clusters so that operational decisions can be decentralized* and taken as close to the relevant area of operation as possible. Include this task in the terms of reference for national cluster coordinators.

» **Cluster Members, Cluster Lead Organizations**

Recommendation 5
Provide sufficient funding and define adequate ways for linking clusters and financing mechanisms

The humanitarian community should ensure that adequate resources are provided for coordination, that clusters have access to resources to implement their strategies and that governance issues relating to financing mechanisms and processes are addressed.

Concrete steps

1   *Provide adequate funding for coordination activities.* Coordination can require substantial resources, yet the affected population bears the cost in the absence of coordination. Donors should therefore ensure that the level and standard of coordination they request from the aid community is matched by resource allocations. As established by the IASC task team on mainstreaming, agencies should by now be able to finance global cluster activities from their core budgets. For field level coordination, cluster lead and co-lead organizations, as well as cluster members, should present emergency budgets including a dedicated share for coordination.

» **Donors, Cluster Lead Organizations at global and country level,**
   Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues

2   *Ensure adequate funding for the implementation of cluster strategies and activities "sponsored" by clusters.* This requires among others to:

   · *Strengthen the link between clusters and pooled funds* so that i) it enables clusters to fund their strategies and under-funded areas; ii) resource allocation is decided at country level; iii) clusters enhance the scrutiny and peer review of proposals; iv) clusters and their lead organizations are not directly involved

in taking resource-allocation decisions;[81] v) funding mechanisms are open to all humanitarian actors; vi) funding mechanisms have a special reserve for rapid response and unexpected needs; vii) funding mechanisms have a special window for funding multi-sectoral proposals.
» **Donors, OCHA, Clusters at country level**

· *Strategically create links between clusters and bilateral donors.* Thus, each cluster should have one or several identified "donors of last resort". While donors should not be regularly included into cluster meetings, clusters could invite donors to individual meetings and should inform them of identified priorities and gaps.
» **Donors, Humanitarian Coordinators, OCHA, Clusters at global and country level, Focal Points for Cross-Cutting Issues**

· *Strengthen links to and the inclusion of non-traditional donors,* especially non-Western donors and the private sector (as donor and operator) and private foundations, in order to avoid irrelevant donations and increase the flow of funds to cluster-sponsored activities. Develop clear guidelines and processes for dealing with resources and capacities offered by military actors.
» **Donors, Clusters at global and country level, Focal-Points for Cross-Cutting Issues, OCHA**

3 *Improve the governance of funding mechanisms to limit conflicts of interest and ensure direct access of international and local NGOs to funding and enhance the transparency of financial transactions linked to clusters.* Clear distinctions between the coordination and financial management functions of cluster lead organizations, direct access to funding mechanisms for NGOs, as well as more transparency, are necessary to avoid conflicts of interest and prevent increased financial dependence of NGOs on UN agencies. To achieve this, small multi-stakeholder steering groups, rather than cluster lead organizations, should take relevant financing decisions.
» **Cluster Lead Organizations at country level, Pooled Fund Mechanisms**

4 *Further define and clarify what "provider of last resort" entails* for different types of clusters, such as service clusters and operational clusters. To enable cluster lead organizations to act not only as "advocates of last resort", but also as "providers of last resort" in the original sense of the term, they should have access to flexible budget lines and / or stockpiles.
» **Global Cluster Lead Organizations, Donors**

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81 This could involve separate vetting and evaluation panels with representative membership, as in the case of the DRC pooled fund model or the oPt CAP process. On the importance to separate clusters from allocation decisions, see also Stoddard (2008), p. XVII.

Recommendation 6
Resolve outstanding policy issues at the global level: i) links to peacekeeping and political missions and humanitarian space, ii) institutional issues

Important political questions, e.g concerning the limits of integration, cannot be taken by operational clusters at country and local level. To resolve some of these issues and address remaining reservations relating to the cluster approach, the following steps should be taken:

Concrete steps

1 *Develop concrete, context sensitive guidelines on the linkages between the cluster approach and peacekeeping or political missions* at the political level. In doing so, draw on lessons learned for example in DRC and Chad, as well as on the ongoing efforts at the global level to define relevant guidance. Define clear criteria for which kinds of actors can become cluster members in which kinds of situations to support national and sub-national clusters in taking relevant decisions. In situations where the Protection Cluster is linked to peacekeeping operations, ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information. Where relevant, explore the GBV information management system currently developed by UNFPA, UNHCR and the IRC.
» **IASC, Members States, OCHA, NGOs, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN Department of Political Affairs, Global Protection Cluster**

2 *Strengthen decisions of Humanitarian Country Teams relating to humanitarian space* through an increased involvement of NGOs, based on the 2006 Principles of Partnership and the 2009 guidance note on Humanitarian Country Teams.
» **Humanitarian Country Teams, Humanitarian Coordinators, NGOs**

3 *Focus the activities of global clusters on identifying and addressing conflicts and systemic incoherence* in humanitarian response, such as the use of status-based vs. needs-based approaches to providing assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and other affected groups.
» **Global Clusters**

4 *Ensure that the Early Recovery Cluster at country and sub-national level focuses on and enhances its advisory function.* This could involve increasing the seniority and level of experience of early recovery advisors, including early recovery into the terms of reference of other cluster coordinators and strengthening their training on this issue. Specific inter-cluster gaps should be addressed by ad hoc task forces or working groups, rather than by one overarching cluster.
» **Early Recovery Cluster, Humanitarian Country Teams, Inter-Cluster Coordination Fora**

5 *Finalize discussions and create a global Food Security Cluster,* integrating food aid, agricultural issues and other livelihood interventions and address related institutional and policy issues at the political level.
» **IASC, WFP, FAO, UNDP**

6 *Resolve conflicts relating to the governance of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster.*
» **IASC, Global ETC Cluster Members**

7 *Rename the 'Oneresponse' website* in order to avoid confusion between the cluster approach and the One UN policy and demonstrate that proper coordination doesn't mean reduction of diversity.
» **IASC, OCHA**

140 To ensure adequate follow-up to these recommendations, the newly created IASC Task Team on Coordination should take the following steps:

· Identify a coordinator for each of the six thematic recommendations.

· Develop a management response plan for all six recommendations, drawing on special input from the six thematic coordinators. The management response plan should indicate which of the recommendations are accepted, amended or rejected and assign responsibilities and timeframes for implementation.

· Make the thematic coordinators responsible for following up with different addressees of 'their' recommendation to track progress in implementation and, if necessary, adapt the management response plan. Jointly plan activities and communication with individual agencies among the coordinators.

· Through the thematic coordinators, develop learning formats, allowing agencies to benefit from each other's implementation experiences.

Annex 1

Selection of support products produced or recommended by global clusters

Agriculture Cluster

- Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, (2009)
- Livelihood Assessment Tool kit (2009)
- Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook (2009)
- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) (2007)

CCCM Cluster

- Camp Management Toolkit (CCCM Cluster 2008)
- Collective Center Management Handbook (currently being developed)
- Guidance note – Coordination and Management of Collective Centres Hosting IDPs (2007)
- Camp Phase-Out and Closure Guidance Note (currently being revised)
- CCCM - Best Practice Review (2008)

Education Cluster

- Education Cluster Coordinator Guide (currently being developed)
- Country-level capacity mapping and planning tool
- INEE Minimum Standards Handbook and Toolkit[82]
- Education Cluster Capacity Mapping Study (2009)
- Education Cluster: Country-level Lessons Learned Review (2008)

Early Recovery Cluster

- Guidance Note on Early Recovery (2008)
- UNDP Policy on Early Recovery (2008)
- Post Conflict / Disaster Needs Assessment
- Post-Disaster Land Guidelines/Post-Conflict Land Guidelines
- CWGER Lessons Learned Exercise – Online Survey Report (2009)
- Key Things to Know About Environment as a "Cross-Cutting" Issue in Early Recovery

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82 http://www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/inee_handbook/

Emergency Shelter Cluster

- Emergency Shelter Coordination Toolkit (currently under review)
- Selecting NFIs for shelter (2009)
- Emergency Shelter Cluster Consultation Project (2006, 2008)
- Transitional Settlement and Reconstruction After Natural Disasters (2009)
- Shelter Projects (2008)
- Local Estimate of Needs for Shelter and Settlement (field version, 2009)

Emergency Telecommunications Cluster

- ETC Description of Services
- Terms of Reference local ETC Working Group
- Assessment Template
- Project Documentation Templates
- Budget Preparation and Inventory Tool (Emergency Management Application)
- Project Closure Report (SPR)
- ICT Best Practices Website

Health Cluster

- Health Cluster Guide: a practical guide for country level implementation of the Health Cluster (English & French) (2009)
- Gap Guidance Materials - Assisting the Health Sector Coordination Mechanism to Identify and Fill Gaps in the Humanitarian Response (2007)
- Health Cluster Guidance Note on Health Recovery (2008)
- Global Health Cluster Suggested Set of Core Indicators and Benchmarks by Category (English & French) (2009)
- Initial Rapid Assessment Toolkit (English & French) (2009)
- Health Resource Availability Mapping System (English & French) (2009)
- Health Information and Nutrition Tracking System (English & French) (2009)

Logistics Cluster

- Global Logistics Cluster Deployment Kit
- Information Management Kit
- Dedicated country pages on www.logcluster.org
- Country level mailing lists functions
- GIS Communication package
- GIS starter kit
- Guidelines for conducting Logistics Capacity Assessments, 2009
- Service Mindset Training SMT, e-learning tool, 2009
- Logistics Operational Guide, currently being developed, launch April 2010

- Customs Information Guide, 2008
- MapCentre on www.logcluster.org

Nutrition Cluster

- A Toolkit for Addressing Nutrition in Emergency Situations (2008)
- Harmonized Training Package (HTP) (2008)
- Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) (2007)
- Review, lessons learnt of and recommendations on the use of Global Nutrition Cluster tools (2009)
- Future directions questionnaire (2009)
- Lessons learning review (2007)

Protection Cluster

- Child Protection Sub-Cluster Coordinator Handbook (2009)
- Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (2007)
- Protecting Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action (2008)
- Handbook on the Protection of Women and Girls (2008)
- IASC Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (2005)
- Review of best practice at country level (ongoing)
- Deployment of technical experts on ageing and disabilities, as well as needs assessment and operational data management to field operations
- Growing the Sheltering Tree, Protection Rights Through Humanitarian Action
- Human Rights Guidance Note for Humanitarian Coordinators
- FAQs on International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law

WASH Cluster

- WASH Cluster Coordination Handbook (2009)
- Several Technical Briefings: Hygiene promotion, Sanitation (urban/rural), Water Supply (urban/rural)
- Global WASH Learning Project (ongoing).
- Implementation of the WASH Cluster Approach, Good Practice and Lessons Learned (2009) (incl. country studies)
- Lessons learned in WASH Response during Urban/Rural Flood Emergencies
- WASH Performance Assessment Tool
- Learning review at country level (ongoing)

Cross-Cutting Issues

Age

- IASC Humanitarian Action and Older Persons - an Essential Brief - French and English

Gender

- IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action: Women, Girls, Boys and Men - Different Needs, Equal Opportunities (2006)
- Gender Guide for Post-Disaster Assessments (Early Recovery Cluster / UNFPA 2009, draft)
- GBV Coordination Handbook (under development)
- GBV Coordination e-learning tools (under development)
- Pocket-Guide to Gender Equality in and through Education in Emergencies (under development)

HIV/AIDS

- IASC Guidelines for Addressing HIV in Humanitarian Settings (UNAIDS/ IASC, 2010)

Environment

- Environmental Needs Assessment in Post-Disaster Situations - A Practical Guide for Implementation (Early Recovery Cluster/UNEP 2008)
- Humanitarian Action and the Environment (OCHA/UNEP)
- Post-Conflict Needs Assessment and Transitional Results Frameworks Tool Kit - Note on Addressing Environmental Issues (2009)

Annex 2

Overview of country-level cluster portraits

Each of the six country studies conducted for this evaluation contains portraits of the individual clusters active in the country. These portraits describe special characteristics of individual clusters and measure their performance against a set of indicators (see Annex 3). The judgment for each indicator is based on extensive review of documentation, interviews and participative exercises facilitated during the evaluation mission to the oPt. On this data basis, each evaluator independently judged the respective clusters. If there were differences, these were discussed between the two evaluators to find a common scoring. This Annex reproduces the indicator scorings, though not the narrative part of the cluster portraits. The scorings reflect tendencies and are not equivalent to cluster-specific evaluations. In the overview, "N/A" stands for not applicable, while "N.E.D." stands for not enough data available. The CCCM Cluster was only assesses in conjunction with emergency shelter and non-food items in Chad and is therefore not listed separately.

Agriculture cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage		N/A	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage		N/A	
3	Attention to differentiated needs			
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors			
5	Hand over and exit strategies			N/A
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system			
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar			
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities			
9	Implementation of provider of last resort			N/A
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members			
11	Relationships between clusters			
12	Quality of information sharing			
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities			
14	Compliance with relevant standards		N.E.D.	
15	Participation of affected population			
16	Accountability to HC & among members			
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors			
18	Quality and level of global cluster support		N.E.D.	N/A

Early recovery cluster

Indicator scales

Nº	Indicator	Chad	DRC*	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt	Uganda#
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage	▮	☐	☐	N/A	▮▮	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage	▮	▮	▮	N/A	▮▮	▮▮
3	Attention to differentiated needs	☐	N.E.D.	▮	▮	▮	☐
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors	▮	▮	▮▮▮	▮	▮	N.E.D.
5	Hand over and exit strategies	▮▮	☐	▮	N.E.D.	N/A	☐
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system	▮	▮▮▮	▮	▮▮	▮	▮
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar	▮	▮▮	▮	▮	▮▮	▮
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities	▮▮	☐	▮	▮	▮	▮
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	▮	☐	▮▮	☐	N.E.D.	☐
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members	▮	▮	▮▮	▮	▮▮▮	☐
11	Relationships between clusters	▮	▮▮▮	▮	▮	▮	▮▮
12	Quality of information sharing	▮▮	▮	▮▮	▮	▮▮	▮
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities	▮	☐	▮▮	▮▮	▮	▮
14	Compliance with relevant standards	☐	N.E.D.	▮▮	N.E.D.	▮	☐
15	Participation of affected population	☐	N.E.D.	☐	▮	▮▮	☐
16	Accountability to HC & among members	☐	☐	▮	▮	▮	▮
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	▮	▮	▮▮▮	▮	▮▮	☐
18	Quality and level of global cluster support	▮	☐	▮	▮▮	▮▮▮	▮

* RRC (Return and Community Rehabilitation)
\# Governance, Infrastructure, Livelihoods (GIL)

Education cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	DRC	Myanmar	the oPt	Uganda
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage		N/A	N.E.D.	
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage		N/A		N.E.D.
3	Attention to differentiated needs				
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors				
5	Hand over and exit strategies				
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system				
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar				
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities				
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	N.E.D.			
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members				
11	Relationships between clusters				
12	Quality of information sharing				
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities				
14	Compliance with relevant standards				
15	Participation of affected population	N.E.D.			
16	Accountability to HC & among members				
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	N.E.D.			
18	Quality and level of global cluster support				N.E.D.

Emergency shelter and NFI cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad*	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage				N/A	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage				N/A	
3	Attention to differentiated needs					
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors					
5	Hand over and exit strategies					
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system					
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar					
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities					
9	Implementation of provider of last resort					
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members					
11	Relationships between clusters					
12	Quality of information sharing					
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities					
14	Compliance with relevant standards					
15	Participation of affected population					
16	Accountability to HC & among members		N.E.D.			
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors					
18	Quality and level of global cluster support				N.E.D.	N/A

* CCCM, Abris et aide non-alimentaire

Emergency telecommunications cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Myanmar	
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage	N/A	
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage	N/A	
3	Attention to differentiated needs	N/A	
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors	▮▮	
5	Hand over and exit strategies	▮▮▮	
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system	▮▮▮	
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar	▮▮	
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities	▮▮▮	
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	N/A	
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members	▮▮▮	
11	Relationships between clusters	N.E.D.	
12	Quality of information sharing	▮▮▮	
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities	▮▮▮	
14	Compliance with relevant standards	▮▮▮	
15	Participation of affected population	N/A	
16	Accountability to HC & among members	▮▮▮	
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	N.E.D.	
18	Quality and level of global cluster support	N.E.D.	
19	Coverage of ETC and logistics services	▮▮▮	

Food security cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti*	Myanmar#	the oPt‡	Uganda†
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	N/A	N.E.D.	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱	N/A	▰▱	▰▱
3	Attention to differentiated needs	▱	N.E.D.	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	N.E.D.	▰▱	▰▱
5	Hand over and exit strategies	▰▱	▰▱	▱	▰▱	N/A	▰▱
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system	▰▱	▰▰▰	▰▱	N.E.D.	▰▱	▰▱
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar	▰▰▱	▰▰▰	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▰▰	▰▰▰
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities	▰▱	▰▰▱	▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	N.E.D.	N/A	▱
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members	▰▰▱	▰▱	▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱
11	Relationships between clusters	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱
12	Quality of information sharing	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▰	▰▰▰
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱
14	Compliance with relevant standards	▱	N.E.D.	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱
15	Participation of affected population	▰▱	▰▱	▱	▰▱	▱	▰▰▰
16	Accountability to HC & among members	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▱
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	▰▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▱	▰▱	▰▰▱	▰▰▰
18	Quality and level of global cluster support	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Food Aid
\# Food
‡ Food Sector
† Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods (FSAL)

Health cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt	Uganda*
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage				N/A		
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage				N/A		N.E.D.
3	Attention to differentiated needs						
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors						
5	Hand over and exit strategies						
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system						
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar						
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities						
9	Implementation of provider of last resort						
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members						
11	Relationships between clusters						
12	Quality of information sharing						
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities						
14	Compliance with relevant standards						
15	Participation of affected population		N.E.D.				
16	Accountability to HC & among members						
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors						
18	Quality and level of global cluster support						

* Health, Nutrition and HIV Aids

Logistics cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti	the oPt
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage	■■■■	■■■□	■■□□	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage	■■□□	■■■□	■□□□	N.E.D.
3	Attention to differentiated needs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors	□□□□	■□□□	■□□□	■□□□
5	Hand over and exit strategies	■□□□	■□□□	□□□□	■■□□
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system	■□□□	■■■■	■□□□	■■□□
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar	■□□□	N.R.	■□□□	■□□□
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities	■■□□	■□□□	■■■■	■■■■
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members	■□□□	■■□□	■■■□	■■■■
11	Relationships between clusters	■□□□	N.E.D.	■□□□	■■■■
12	Quality of information sharing	■■■■	■■□□	■■■□	■■□□
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities	■■□□	■■□□	■■■■	■□□□
14	Compliance with relevant standards	■■□□	N.E.D.	N.E.D.	■■□□
15	Participation of affected population	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
16	Accountability to HC & among members	■□□□	■□□□	■□□□	■■□□
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	■■□□	■■■■	■■■■	■■□□
18	Quality and level of global cluster support	■■□□	■■■■	■■■■	■■■■
19	Coverage of ETC and logistics services	–	■■■■	■■■□	■■■■

Nutrition cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	Uganda*
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage	▪	▪	▪	N/A	▪
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage	▪	▪	▪	N/A	N.E.D.
3	Attention to differentiated needs	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
5	Hand over and exit strategies	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
9	Implementation of provider of last resort	▪	▪	▪	N.E.D.	▪
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
11	Relationships between clusters	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
12	Quality of information sharing	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
14	Compliance with relevant standards	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
15	Participation of affected population	▪	N.E.D.		N.E.D.	▪
16	Accountability to HC & among members	▪	▪		▪	▪
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
18	Quality and level of global cluster support	N.E.D.	▪	▪	▪	▪

* Health, Nutrition and HIV Aids

Protection cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt	Uganda
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage				N/A	N.E.D.	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage				N/A		
3	Attention to differentiated needs					N.E.D.	
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors						
5	Hand over and exit strategies						
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system						
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar						
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities						
9	Implementation of provider of last resort		N.E.D.	N.E.D.			
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members						
11	Relationships between clusters						
12	Quality of information sharing						
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities						
14	Compliance with relevant standards		N.E.D.				
15	Participation of affected population		N.E.D.				
16	Accountability to HC & among members						
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors						
18	Quality and level of global cluster support						

WASH cluster

Indicator scales

№	Indicator	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	the oPt	Uganda
1	Extent of additional geographic coverage				N/A	N.E.D.	N.E.D.
2	Extent of additional thematic coverage				N/A		
3	Attention to differentiated needs			N.E.D.			
4	Involvement of appropriate national actors						
5	Hand over and exit strategies						
6	Interaction of cluster with HC system						
7	Interaction of cluster with financial pillar						
8	Implementation of leadership responsibilities						
9	Implementation of provider of last resort						
10	Relationships among cluster (non-)members						
11	Relationships between clusters						
12	Quality of information sharing						
13	Cohesiveness of policies and activities						
14	Compliance with relevant standards						
15	Participation of affected population						
16	Accountability to HC & among members						
17	Meeting needs of humanitarian actors						
18	Quality and level of global cluster support						

Annex 3

List of indicators used in the evaluation

KEY QUESTION

To what degree has the cluster approach modified and strengthened the humanitarian response
(in terms of gaps filled and greater geographic, thematic and quality of coverage, as well as ownership/connectedness)?

INDICATOR

1. EXTENT OF ADDITIONAL GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Extent of additional geographic coverage (gaps and duplications) since the introduction of the cluster approach in frequently reoccurring sudden onset or protracted crises.

NOTE: When assessing the additional geographic and thematic coverage achieved through the cluster approach, current response efforts need to be compared to previous response efforts. Such a comparison is only reasonably possible in cases of long-term, protracted crises or where similar sudden-onset disasters reoccur frequently

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: No additional geographic coverage despite agreed upon needs; duplication not identified

1: Measures for better geographic coverage developed, but not implemented; duplications identified, but not addressed

2: Measures partly implemented; geographic coverage increasing; duplications avoided

3: Evidence of significantly increased geographic coverage

INDICATOR

2. EXTENT OF ADDITIONAL THEMATIC COVERAGE

Extent of additional thematic coverage (gaps and duplications) since the introduction of the cluster approach, including the coverage of cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, HIV), within and between clusters

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: No additional coverage of programming areas despite agreed upon needs; duplication within and between sectors not identified

1: Gaps and duplications within and between sectors identified, but not (yet) addressed

2: Expanded coverage and reduced duplications within clusters, but not between sectors

3: Evidence of significantly increased coverage and significantly reduced duplications within and between sectors

INDICATOR

3. ATTENTION TO DIFFERENTIATED NEEDS

Quality of geographic and thematic coverage (timeliness of activities and targeting based on differentiated needs/risks linked to age, gender, diversity)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: No differentiation and prioritization of needs, including according to age, sex, diversity

1: Prioritization of needs but no differentiation of needs by age, sex and other relevant categories (disabilities, ethnicity etc.); response not timely

2: Prioritization of needs and timely response but no differentiation of needs by age, sex, diversity and other relevant categories (disabilities, ethnicity etc.)

3: Tailor-made and timely geographic and thematic response according to priorities and specific needs of different groups of affected people / better targeted programming to appropriate affected populations previously underserved

INDICATOR

4. INVOLVEMENT OF APPROPRIATE NATIONAL ACTORS

Degree of involvement of appropriate national and local actors (state institutions, civil society)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: Appropriate national and local actors are not involved, receive no funding and the response is inconsistent with national and local strategies; inappropriate actors are involved

1: Cluster members are sharing information with appropriate local actors (the government, local authorities and / or civil society), but provide no funding to local civil society actors

2: Appropriate local actors are involved in needs assessment, planning and decision making, receive a share of funding and response is consistent with national and local strategies, including those for disaster risk reduction

3: Where appropriate, international actors are participating in nationally or locally-led response efforts, with local civil society actors receiving the bulk of international funding

INDICATOR

5. HAND OVER AND EXIT STRATEGIES

Extent to which hand over and exit strategies have been developed and implemented in order to ensure that local government and civil society actors build on and continue efforts, including cross-cutting efforts (gender, environment, HIV)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: Cluster lead agencies and members have no strategy for hand over and exit and do not integrate preparedness, contingency planning and early warning in their work plans; activities disengage the local authorities

1: Cluster lead agencies and members have developed an exit strategy and have identified capacity gaps, but have not implemented it; the strategy does not take into account existing national strategies and cross-cutting issues

Cluster lead agencies and members mainstream their strategies into existing national strategies and are beginning to implement hand-over strategies, are engaging the government and supporting the development of (national) frameworks for preparedness, disaster risk reduction, contingency planning and early warning; cross-cutting issues are partially addressed

3: Effective hand-over takes place, local frameworks are considered and strengthened, including in their cross-cutting dimensions, local authorities are engaged and technical knowledge has been transferred

KEY QUESTION

How is the cluster approach interacting with the other pillars of humanitarian reform, in particular the HC system and the reformed funding mechanisms and is it implemented in the spirit of the 'Principles for Partnership?

INDICATOR

6. INTERACTION OF THE CLUSTER WITH THE HC SYSTEM

Extent to which the cluster approach and Humanitarian Coordinator system mutually support or undermine or each other

EVALUATION CRITERION

Coherence

SCALE

0: The HC does not fulfil its role to coordinate clusters / crucial decisions are made without the involvement of the HC; OCHA does not support the HC to fulfil its role; HC and clusters actively try to undermine each other's initiatives.

1: There is no significant interaction between the HC and the cluster approach.

2: Cluster coordinators and HCT members begin to see benefits of HC role in cluster coordination and grant the HC a certain degree of informal power; OCHA supports the HC in such a way that s/he can leverage this power; the HC considers cluster positions in his/her decisions and advocacy activities.

3: HC exercises clearly defined responsibilities for clusters and this role is accepted by the members of the different clusters. The HC systematically builds his/her strategies around cluster input. This role helps the clusters to better achieve their goals and strengthens the HC's formal and informal coordination role; HC and cluster system actively support each other

INDICATOR

7. INTERACTION OF THE CLUSTER WITH THE FINANCIAL PILLAR

Extent to which the cluster approach and the financing pillar of the humanitarian reform (CERF, Pooled Funding, ERF, and innovations in the CAP) mutually support or undermine each other

SCALE

0: The cluster approach and the new financing / appeal mechanisms undermine each other's goals or further emphasize each other's weaknesses (e.g. exclusiveness, "silo building" between clusters, etc.)

1: The interaction between the cluster approach and the new financing / appeal mechanisms sporadically strengthen the participating actors' ability to get access to information and resources, help to develop coordinated appeals and proposal development according to needs and identified gaps, but are not always consistent with the 'Principles of Partnership'

2: The interaction between the cluster approach and the new financing / appeal mechanisms often strengthen the participating actors' ability to get access to information and resources, help to develop coordinated appeals and proposal development according to needs and identified gaps, and are in most cases in line with the 'Principles of Partnership'

3: The interaction between the cluster approach and the new financing / appeal mechanisms strengthen the participating actors' ability to get access to information and resources, help to develop coordinated appeals and proposal development according to needs and identified gaps, and are in line with the 'Principles of Partnership'

EVALUATION CRITERION

Coherence

KEY QUESTION

To what degree has the cluster approach achieved the intended outputs (predictable leadership, partnership/cohesiveness, accountability)?

INDICATOR

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Clarity of roles and level of assumption of responsibility of cluster lead agencies and OCHA, including for cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, HIV)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Output

SCALE

0: Roles and responsibilities are unclear with overlapping responsibilities and conflicts or no / low level of acceptance of leadership; cluster leads represent their agencies' interest not the cluster's interest at HCT meetings

1: Clearly defined roles, including for cross-cutting issues and where clusters are co-led at the field level, but insufficient assumption of responsibility or limited acceptance of leadership; cluster members feel only partially represented at HCT meetings by the cluster lead

2: Cluster leads carry out their responsibilities as defined in TORs (including cross-cutting issues) and exhibit responsibility for the work within the cluster, not only for their own operational demands, and the cluster lead's leadership role is accepted by the majority of cluster members; they feel largely represented at HCT meetings by the cluster lead

3: Responsibilities within and between clusters are clear and cross-cutting issues are incorporated into cluster work plans and the leadership role is broadly accepted; cluster members feel well represented by the cluster lead at HCT meetings

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INDICATOR

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVIDER OF LAST RESORT

Clarity of the concept of "provider of last resort" and level of assumption of the related responsibilities by cluster leads (for those clusters where it applies)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: There is no common understanding of the concepts of first port of call and provider of last resort

1: Clear common understanding of the concepts exists (e.g. as defined in the 'IASC Operational Guidance on the concept of Provider of Last Resort'), but cluster leads have not assumed responsibility, despite the necessity

2: Where necessary, cluster leads have started to act as "advocators of last resort" but not as providers of last resort.

3: Cluster leads have acted effectively as providers of last resort, where necessary

INDICATOR

10. RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CLUSTER (NON-)MEMBERS

Quality of relationships within clusters and between cluster members and non-members with respect to the 'Principles of Partnership' (assessment missions, advocacy activities, strategy development, decision-making, access to common resources)

EVALUATION CRITERION
Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL
Output

SCALE

0: Cluster members are not included in relevant cluster activities (assessment missions, advocacy activities and decision making), appeals and allocation of common funds reflect priorities of one agency only and / or there are open conflicts among cluster members

1: UN and non-UN cluster members are included in cluster activities (assessment missions, advocacy activities and decision making) and allocation of common funds in a consultative fashion but not on an equal basis; they do not take into account non-cluster members; priorities of one agency dominate in appeals

2: UN and non-UN cluster members do joint assessment missions, advocacy activities, cluster decisions and define cluster strategies (including resource allocation of common funds) in accordance with the 'Principles of Partnership', but do not take into account concerns and positions of non-cluster members; appeals and allocation of common funds reflect cluster priorities

3: Cluster members work on the basis of the 'Principles of Partnerships', take into account inter-cluster concerns and the positions of non-cluster humanitarian actors; appeals and allocation of common funds reflect collectively identified needs

INDICATOR

11. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CLUSTERS

Quality of relationships between clusters

EVALUATION CRITERION
Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL
Outcome

SCALE

0: Cluster approach undermines pre-existing inter-sectoral coordination; coordination mechanisms duplicate or undermine each other; OCHA has taken no steps to address this situation

1: Cluster approach builds on, but does not improve pre-existing coordination mechanisms; information on needs assessments, activities and service shared between clusters; OCHA attempts to strengthen cross-cluster linkages

2: Inter-sectoral / inter-cluster linkages strengthened through cluster approach and the active involvement of OCHA; strategy for avoiding inter-cluster duplication and enhancing inter-cluster complementarity exists

3: Facilitated by OCHA, clusters have effective linkages to all other relevant clusters/sectors, have clearly allocated responsibilities for inter-cluster and cross-cutting issues and coordinate activities adequately based on jointly identified needs

INDICATOR

12. QUALITY OF INFORMATION SHARING

Quality of and capacity for information sharing (including information about cross-cutting issues, e.g. gender, environment, HIV)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: Information is not shared

1: Some information is shared among cluster members, but not outside or among clusters

2: Information is shared effectively (regularly updated and easily accessible) within clusters; some information is shared with relevant non-cluster members and other clusters

3: Regularly updated information of high-quality and technical detail is shared effectively within clusters; cluster members conduct joint needs assessments; data collection and evaluations and information is shared effectively with relevant non-cluster members, other clusters and the HC/RC and HCT

INDICATOR

13. COHESIVENESS OF POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

Degree of cohesiveness of policies and activities

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: No shared objectives, contradictory strategies and activities of cluster members

1: Common objectives, but contradictory approaches, strategies and activities

2: Collectively shared objectives among cluster members; joint strategies and work plans and complementary activities; complementary strategies with other relevant clusters and non-cluster humanitarian actors, including donors

3: Joint policies and strategies are being implemented by a majority of humanitarian actors; division of labour with non-cluster humanitarian actors is clearly defined and implemented

---

INDICATOR

14. COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT STANDARDS

Extent of compliance with relevant standards, including standards that cover cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, HIV)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Output / Outcome

SCALE

0: Relevant standards do not exist, have not been defined or are unknown to the cluster members

1: Relevant standards exist or have been defined, where relevant adapted to country-specific circumstances and are accepted by key stakeholders

2: Humanitarian agencies are complying to a large extent to those standards

3: Relevant standards are completely implemented

INDICATOR

15. PARTICIPATION OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION

Extent and quality of the participation of the affected population(s) (and where relevant, the host communities) and resulting degree of accountability to the affected population

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Output

SCALE

0: Affected populations are not informed and not involved in needs assessment, decision-making, implementation and monitoring

1: Adequate information about activities and consultation with affected populations

2: Participatory needs assessment and needs prioritization

3: Joint planning and decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, leading to a consistent application of relevant standards / findings of participatory assessments guide the work of the cluster and are used in advocacy with authorities

INDICATOR

16. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE HC AND AMONG MEMBERS

Degree of existence, effectiveness and implementation of accountability mechanisms (definition of roles, clear reporting lines, monitoring and evaluation, availability of information / transparency, enforcement mechanisms) between HC/RC and clusters and within clusters

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Output

SCALE

0: Expectations and roles unclear, insufficient transparency, incentives and enforcement mechanisms

1: Clear expectations and roles, adequate reporting (but not monitoring and evaluation and no enforcement mechanisms)

2: Appropriate information / transparency (adequate monitoring and evaluation), poor enforcement mechanisms

3: Effective incentives and enforcement mechanisms

KEY QUESTION

Does the cluster approach enable participating organizations to deliver better response through coordination and information sharing?

INDICATOR

17. MEETING NEEDS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Extent to which the cluster approach responds to the needs / expectations of humanitarian actors with respect to coordination (including inter-agency coordination) and information sharing in the specific country context

EVALUATION CRITERION

Relevance

SCALE

0: Humanitarian agencies question the raison d'être of the cluster approach; participation in cluster meetings is very low (in terms of number of people, rank of participants or attendance induced only by financial incentives); common services are not requested; cluster or HCT meetings and other coordination mechanisms are not used to share information and exchange ideas / approaches

1: Humanitarian agencies are sceptical, but show reasonable participation common services at times requested and used; cluster or HCT meetings and other coordination mechanisms are sporadically used to share information and exchange ideas / approaches

2: Humanitarian agencies recognize some added value, show committed participation in cluster meetings and use common services increasingly; meetings are used to share information and exchange ideas

3: Humanitarian agencies recognize cluster approach as highly relevant to their needs, participate strongly and effectively in cluster meetings and frequently use common services; meetings and other coordination mechanisms are used to share information and develop common approaches

KEY QUESTION

What kind of support have global clusters delivered and how effectively has it been used at the country and field levels? Which inputs included in the generic TORs have not been provided?

INDICATOR

18. QUALITY AND LEVEL OF GLOBAL CLUSTER SUPPORT

Quality (timeliness, relevant to local contexts, level of technical standard) and level of global cluster support: Standards & policy setting (guidance and tools); Response capacity (surge capacity, training, system development, stockpiles); Operational support (capacity needs assessment, emergency preparedness, long-term planning, access to expertise, advocacy, resource mobilization, pooling resources)

EVALUATION CRITERION

Efficiency

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Input

SCALE

0: No support

1: Support not relevant to field and/or not timely

2: Relevant support at high technical standards provided, but not timely

3: Support provided, with impact on practice, including on cross-cutting issues

KEY QUESTION

To what degree has the cluster approach modified and strengthened the humanitarian response (in terms of gaps filled and greater geographic, thematic and quality of coverage, as well as ownership/connectedness)?

INDICATOR

19. COVERAGE OF ETC AND LOGISTICS SERVICES

Coverage of ETC and logistics services

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effectiveness

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Outcome

SCALE

0: ETC and logistics services are neither sufficient, nor relevant to the needs of their users

1: ETC and logistics services are sufficient in quantity, but not targeted to the needs of their users

2: ETC and logistics services are targeted to the needs of their users, but do not cover all needs

3: The needs of ETC and logistics users are completely covered

KEY QUESTION

What intentional or unintentional positive or negative effects of the cluster approach concerning affected populations, the coordination and interactions among participating organizations and the humanitarian system as a whole can be demonstrated?

INDICATOR

20. EVIDENCE FOR EFFECTS

Evidence for effects (intentional or unintentional, positive or negative) of the cluster approach on the affected populations, the coordination and interactions among participating organizations and the humanitarian system as a whole can be demonstrated

EVALUATION CRITERION

Effects

KEY QUESTION

Is there evidence that the results of the cluster approach justify the inputs of major stakeholders such as the IASC, NGOs, host communities and donors at the country level?

INDICATOR

21. EVIDENCE THAT RESULTS JUSTIFY INVESTMENTS

Evidence that the results of the cluster approach justify the investment made by major stakeholders at the country level

EVALUATION CRITERION

Efficiency

LEVEL OF LOGIC MODEL

Input

Annex 4

Findings and their sources

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
LEADERSHIP									
Leadership has become more predictable and more committed	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
The provision of resources for coordinators varies between agencies and countries	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Resources for coordination tend to be concentrated at national level	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	○
The mainstreaming of cluster lead responsibilities remains limited	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Leadership is broadly accepted at country level	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Co-lead and co-chair arrangements are appreciated, but lack clearly defined roles and responsibilities	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
GUIDANCE									
Important guidelines have been created to clarify the concept of the cluster approach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
These guidelines are not sufficiently known (including by cluster coordinators)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Critical elements of guidance are missing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
GLOBAL CLUSTER SUPPORT									
The perception of global suppport is generally low	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○
But global clusters have provided important support, including surge capacity, trainings, learning exercises and handbooks	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
CLUSTER FOCUS AND MANAGEMENT									
Many clusters are not managed effectively enough	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Actors complain that meetings take up too much time	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
The leadership capacity and ability to apply relevant facilitation techniques of coordinators is often insufficient	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Actors complain that meeting schedules are disconnected from coordination needs	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
Cluster activities are often not concrete and action-oriented enough	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
ROLE OF OCHA AND INTER-CLUSTER COORDINATION									
The role of OCHA is critical for making the cluster approach work	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	○
Inter-cluster coordination remains weak	◉	○	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	○
Inter-cluster meetings tend to focus on information sharing and do not systematically identify multidisciplinary issues, duplications or gaps	◉	○	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○	◉
Strategic inter-cluster coordination mechanisms are lacking as HCTs mainly work as inter-agency, not inter-cluster meetings	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○	◉
Important multi-sectoral or inter-cluster issues are not addressed	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	◉
Overlaps between clusters exist	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○	○
The creation of targeted multi-displinary groups for specific issues remains an exception	○	○	◉	◉	○	◉	○	◉	○
CCCM, protection and early recovery overlap with inter-cluster coordination	◉	○	○	◉	○	◉	○	○	○
COORDINATION WITH EXISTING MECHANISMS									
Clusters fail to coordinate, link or support with existing coordination mechanisms and add to the multiplication of coordination mechanisms	○	○	◉	○	◉	◉	○	○	◉
Local structures and capacities are not sufficiently analyzed before cluster activation	◉	○	◉	○	◉	◉	○	◉	◉
Existing coordination mechanisms are weakened through competition with clusters	○	○	◉	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Governments often lack the capacity to take over coordination	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Coordination between clusters and rapid response mechanisms (e.g. UNDAC) is weak	○	◉	◉	○	○	○	◉	○	○

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER PILLARS OF HUMANITARIAN REFORM									
The potential of mutual support between the cluster approach and the Humanitarian Coordinator system remains largely unexplored	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
Interactions with the CAP and Flash Appeals are very positive, but threaten to divert attention away from other cluster activities	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
Funding trends in the CAP and Flash Appeals often create disappointment and disincentives for the participation of smaller organizations	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	○
An active role of clusters in pooled funds empowers clusters, but can undermine partnership	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	●	○
HRFs, ERFs and HERFs were only sometimes used to fill critical cluster gaps	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Financial flows between UN agencies and NGOs are frequently affected by delays and this can undermine partnership	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●
PARTNERSHIP									
Cluster approach strengthens partnership between UN agencies and INGOs and among INGOs: High rate of participation; absence of principled opposition	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
UN-INGO co-lead / co-facilitator arrangements are becoming more frequent and show positive results	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Cluster involvement in resource allocation decisions undermines partnership	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
Bad management and poor facilitation of clusters undermine partnership	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	●
Cluster links to peacekeeping forces undermine partnership	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
ACCOUNTABILITY									
Accountability of clusters and their members to Humanitarian Coordinators is minimal	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
HCs often lack capacity and do not have a strong humanitarian background	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	○	○
Reporting lines between clusters and Humanitarian Coordinators are problematic	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Clusters strengthen peer accountability	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT									
Clusters enhance information sharing and this is recognized as an important added value	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Information management and institutional memories remain critical problems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Custom-made information management solutions add value	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Level of information in 3W is not detailed enough for concrete planning	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
Sophisticated ITC solutions are very costly, impossible to maintain and difficult to access for local organizations.	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
The division of labor between OCHA and cluster lead organizations in cluster and inter-cluster information management is difficult to implement as the two overlap	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○
COORDINATION OF NEEDS ASSESSMENTS									
Clusters have not been able to address prevailing problems relating to needs assessments: Duplications and incoherences remain	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
Clusters improve the sharing of needs assessment results	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
An increasing number of inter-agency needs assessment is being implemented, with sometimes problematic effects on the affected population	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●	●
COHERENCE									
Clusters strengthen coherence relating to specific operational issues	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Clusters are unable to address fundamental incoherences in the system	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	●
Clusters allow for continuing diversity of approaches	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	●
Clusters are involved in developing and disseminating local standards	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Clusters are not monitoring compliance with standards	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○

EFFECTS ON COVERAGE

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
It is difficult to clearly attribute changes in coverage to the introduction of the cluster approach	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Clusters reduce duplications	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Clusters lead to increased consideration for some previously neglected issues	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Timelines created by affected populations show no clear correlation between changes in coverage and quality of services and the introduction of clusters	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	○	○
Cluster work plans rarely focus on prioritizing needs and organizing a collective response	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Lead agencies rarely act as providers of last resort, but advocate to donors for resources	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
The integration of cross-cutting issues in the activities of clusters and their members has remained minimal, with only few exceptions	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
It is unclear who bears what responsibility for promoting cross-cutting issues	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	●
The definition of cross-cutting issues is unclear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Cluster coordinators lack expertise on cross-cutting issues	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
Global gender and protection stand-by capacities are often used to run clusters, rather than to ensure the mainstreaming of these issues	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	○
Early Recovery and Protection are often treated more as clusters than cross-cutting issues	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Integration of cross-cutting issues into needs assessment remains weak	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	○	○

PARTICIPATION OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
Clusters have not been active in promoting participatory approaches among their members	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Apart from some notable exceptions, clusters have not used participatory approaches in their own activities	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
OWNERSHIP									
To date, clusters have largely failed to integrate national and local actors appropriately and have undermined ownership	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●
Governments are not sufficiently consulted before clusters are activated	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	●
Co-chair arrangements with government officials rarely result in their active participation	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	●
Clusters are too late in defining their exit strategies	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
The participation of national and local NGOs in the cluster approach remains marginal	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Where national and local NGOs participate in clusters, this can have an important capacity strengthening effect	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	●
SPEED OF RESPONSE									
Cluster at global level, especially the service clusters, have developed mechanisms to ensure speedy response	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○
Through the clear designation of lead organizations, sector-based coordination mechanisms can be set up more rapidly	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●
Clusters, especially when badly managed and facilitated, can increase the heaviness and unwieldiness of the system and thereby slow it down	●	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	○
HUMANITARIAN IDENTITY AND HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES									
Clusters strengthen humanitarian identity and lead more organizations to focus on humanitarian assistance	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
In specific contexts, clusters can contribute to the de-politicization of situations and approaches	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○
Clusters exacerbate the split between humanitarian and development approaches	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
Close cooperation in situations of financial dependence with actors linked to peacekeeping operations or governments that are parties to a conflict can undermine the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
The title of the "one response" website causes concern among some humanitarian actors	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	●

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda	Global interviews	Survey	Other evaluations or studies
ABILITY TO LEARN									
The cluster approach strengthens the ability of the humanitarian system to learn	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	◉	◉
Clusters enhance peer accountability	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
Clusters make problems more visible and increase the pressure to address them	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	◉	○	◉
STRUCTURAL ISSUES									
The meaning of protection and early recovery is unclear or controversial	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○
The creation of specific clusters for protection and early recovery hinders the consideration of these issues as cross-cutting issues	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○
Political issues hamper the work of protection, early recovery and food security	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	○	◉
There is a need for a Food Security Cluster bringing together Food Aid, Agriculture and Livelihood issues	◉	◉	◉	◉	○	◉	◉	◉	○
Governance problems exist in the ETC Cluster	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉	◉	○

Annex 5

Interviewees

The evaluation team chose a bottom-up process, focusing mainly on country and local-level research. The following table provides an overview of the total number of people interviewed per stakeholder group at country and local level. Detailed lists of country and local-level interviews and focus groups are included in the country reports. Further below, this section contains a detailed list of individuals interviewed at global level.

	Chad	DRC	Haiti	Myanmar	oPt	Uganda
UN staff	45	74	29	53	58	69
INGOs	18	33	17	25	17	52
Local NGOs	3	8	2	11	17	3
Red Cross Movement	4	5	2	14	2	2
Donors	2	8	4	2	9	5
Government	12	8	6	6	8	21
Affected population (# group discussions)	35	21	3	9	3	2
Other		1		7	2	2
Total	129, plus 8 group discussions	158, plus 14 group discussions	63, plus 4 group discussions	118, plus 9 group discussions	113, plus 3 group discussions	154, plus 2 group discussions

Agriculture Cluster

Luca Alinovi, IPC process, FAO
Cristina Amaral, FAO
Mona Chaya, Intelligence and Coordination Unit, FAO
Daniele Donati, FAO
Henri Josserand, early warning system, FAO

Vincent O'Reilly, cluster capacity building, FAO Consultant
Laurent Thomas, Agriculture Cluster Chair, FAO
Richard Trenchard, Global Cluster Coordinator, FAO
Jeff Tschirley, Chief of TCER, FAO

CCCM Cluster

Lea Matheson, CCCM Cluster Co-Chair, IOM
Kim Roberson, CCCM Cluster Co-Chair, UNHCR

Early Recovery Cluster

Jennifer Worrell, Early Recovery Cluster Chair, UNDP/BCPR
Jahal de Meritens, Early Recovery Cluster Coordinator, UNDP/BCPR

Education Cluster

Deborah Haines, Education Cluster Interim Deputy Coordinator, Save the Children
Roger Wright, Education Cluster Coordinator, UNICEF

Emergency Shelter and NFIs Cluster

Sajjad Malik, Emergency Shelter Cluster Co-Chair, UNHCR
Graham Saunders, Emergency Shelter Cluster Co-Chair, IFRC

Emergency Telecommunications Cluster

Elie Ayoud, ETC, UNHCR
Oscar Caleman, ETC, WFP
Brian Carlson, ETC Cluster, WVI/HopeNet
Steve Fazio, ETC focal point, WHO
Runar Holden, ETC, UNICEF
Chérif Ghaly, ETC Global Cluster Co-Lead, OCHA
Alfred Gilman, ETC, WFP
Martin Kristensson, ETC, WFP

Health Cluster

Eric Laroche, Health Cluster Chair, WHO

Logistics Cluster

Amer Daoudi, Logistics Cluster Chair, WFP
Mohamed El-Kouhene, External Relations, WFP
Kirstie Farmer, Information Management Officer, cluster support cell, WFP
Matthew Hollingworth, Logistics Cluster, WFP

Nutrition Cluster

Leah Richardson, Nutrition Cluster Advisor, UNICEF

Protection Cluster

Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, Protection Cluster Chair, UNHCR
Child Protection Area of Responsibility, UNICEF
Human Rights Area of Responsibility, OHCHR
GBV Area of Responsibility, UNFPA
Rule of Law and Justice Area of Responsibility, UNDP
Housing, Land and Property Rights Area of Responsibility, UN HABITAT
Mine Action Area of Responsibility
Belinda Holdsworth, ProCap Responsible, OCHA

WASH Cluster

William Fellow, WASH Cluster Lead, UNICEF

Cross-Cutting Issues

Thobias Bergmann, UNAIDS
Tannia Cristiansen, UNAIDS
Tom Delrue, Focal Point Humanitarian Action and Early Recovery, UNEP
Asif Ali Zaidi, UNEP
Leo Kenny, HIV Focal Point, UNAIDS

NGOs

Jean-Marc Biquet, MSF Swiss
Alain Boinet, Solidarités, Directeur général
Bethan Montegue, ICVA
Ed Schenkenberg, ICVA Coordinator
Rüdiger Schöch, ICVA
Annie Street, NGO and the Humanitarian Reform Project
Manisha Thomas, ICVA

ICRC

Johanna Grombach Wagner, Assistant to the DG, ICRC
Lise Boudreault, Humanitarian Diplomacy Division, ICRC

OCHA

Mark Cutts, Senior Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordination Support Section, OCHA Geneva
Sune Hjelmervik Gudnitz, Humanitarian Affairs Adviser, HCSS, OCHA NY
Rashid Khalikov, Director, OCHA NY
Rudolf Muller, Deputy Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA NY
Stephen O'Malley, Chief CERF, OCHA NY
Rachel Quick, Humanitarian Coordination Support Section, OCHA Geneva

Other

Jesper Lund, Head of UNDAC
Kiplin Perkins, Director, DPKO Department of Field Support
Marianne Ward, WFP, Food Aid Policy

Annex 6

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Annex 7

Survey results

Aim and method of the survey

The survey pursued the following main goals:

- Collecting the ideas and thoughts of individuals involved in the work of global clusters who could not be interviewed in person.

- Reaching organizations outside the cluster system (thus not even participating as "observers") to find out more about their reasons for not participating in cluster coordination.

The survey collected a broad range of practical examples relating to the implementation of the cluster approach and ideas for its improvement. The evaluation team developed the survey questions after the first three case study trips. The questions covered those issues identified by the team as central questions and where the findings from the countries suggested that more input and thinking was needed from a wider range of experienced individuals.

This annex can only provide an overview of general trends of some of the answers. It cannot paint a complete picture of all the interesting ideas and insights the evaluation team gained through this survey.

Information about the respondents

The survey invitation was sent to over 600 individuals via e-mail. 241 persons responded to the survey. A balanced mix of persons working for different UN organizations, many INGOs and some parts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement answered the questions.

47% of respondents indicated that they have experience working with clusters at both headquarters and country level, 18% at headquarters level only, while 35% had experience only at country level. This high number of country-level respondents indicates that invitees shared the survey invitation more broadly.

With respect to the countries respondents have worked in, there is a very balanced picture, with all major natural disasters/conflicts on all continents covered.

Observer members/cluster non-members

Despite the evaluation team's efforts to identify organizations outside the cluster system at country level and through global level research - mainly Faith-Based Organizations – they either did not respond to the survey or turned out to be involved in cluster coordination after all. In the end, only a handful of observers or organizations not participating in cluster coordination responded to the survey. Reasons for not participating included that meetings were held in the capital city, far away from the organizations' operational base, and at a very short notice. None of the respondents voiced principled objections to the cluster approach.

Role of the respondent's organization in the cluster system
(multiple answers possible)

Global cluster member	91	229
National cluster member	84	229
Global cluster co-lead agency	82	229
Cluster (co-)lead agency at country level	53	229
No cluster member and no observer*	11	229
Observer member in the global clusters	6	229
Observer member in national cluster(s)	2	229
Other	21	229

(*some were external consultants having worked for clusters)

Total number of respondents: 229

Respondents have personally worked with the following clusters (multiple answers possible)

Cluster	Count	Total
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	80	212
Early Recovery	60	212
Protection	54	212
Emergency Shelter	52	212
Logistics	52	212
Health	49	212
Food Aid / Food Security	47	212
Education	44	212
Nutrition	34	212
CCCM	32	212
Agriculture	31	212
Emergency Telecommunications	20	212
Other	14	212

Total number of respondents: 212

Factors strengthening/undermining the cluster approach

A high number of respondents thought that better trained, dedicated cluster coordinators would be most important for strengthening the cluster approach.

As factors undermining the cluster approach, respondents most often cited a lack of partnership/ UN-centric approach, lack of support by Humanitarian Coordinators, insufficient information management, bad inter-cluster coordination, insufficient inclusion of local and national NGOs, as well as insufficient global cluster support and commitment by cluster lead agencies.

On the positive side, several respondents felt that the strong country level focus of the cluster approach has been beneficial to the cluster approach and should be continued. Another positive factor mentioned several times was the benefit of a strongly coordinated and cooperative NGO group in clusters.

Adaptation to pre-existing coordination/involvement of government

Coordination mechanisms existing before introduction of the cluster approach

3.5% None

7.1% Other

12.3%
Geographic/area-based
coordination

14.1% Don't know

15.4%
Sectoral coordination
(co-)led by the government

27.4%
Sectoral coordination among
humanitarian actors with
participation of the government

20.3%
Separate governmental and
international coordination
mechanisms
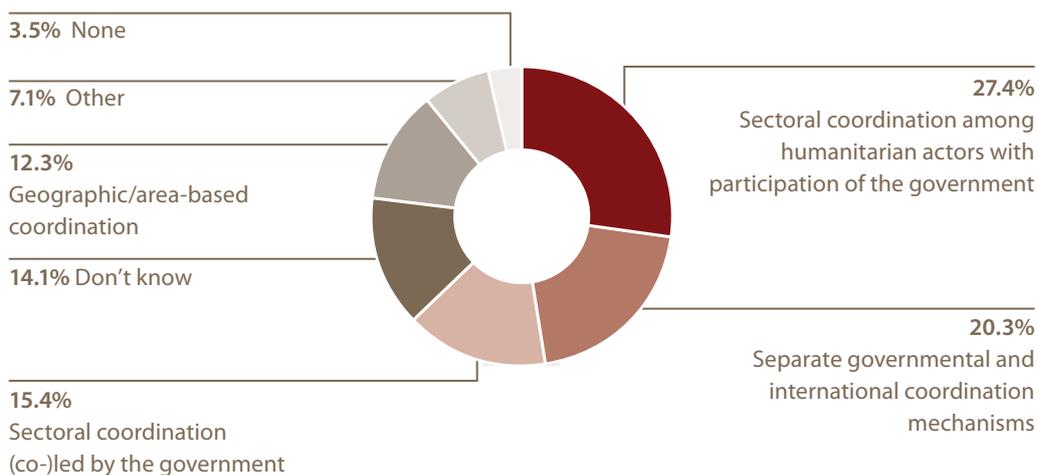
Total number of respondents: 125

In many countries, coordination mechanisms were already in place when the cluster approach was introduced – most often with participation of the government. Only 3.5% of respondents said that there was no preexisting coordination mechanism in place when the cluster approach was introduced.

Did the cluster approach build on these mechanisms?

15.5%
Don't know

14.5%
No

70%
Yes
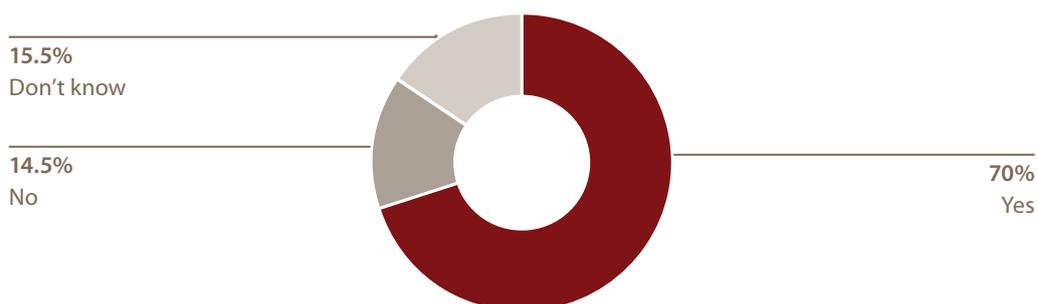
Total number of respondents: 125

Coordination at global level

75% of respondents felt that the introduction of the cluster approach had improved coordination and information exchange at the global level. They perceived the effects of working in global cluster as very beneficial, creating healthy dynamics (expectations to coordinate and partnership) among the members. WASH, Logistics and Education were cited several times as very well functioning, inclusive clusters, while several respondents criticized the confusion over leadership roles in the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster and in particular the stance of WFP.

Accountability

a) Peer accountability

In your experience, did/do cluster members (informally) hold each other accountable?

18%
Don't know

49%
Yes

33%
No
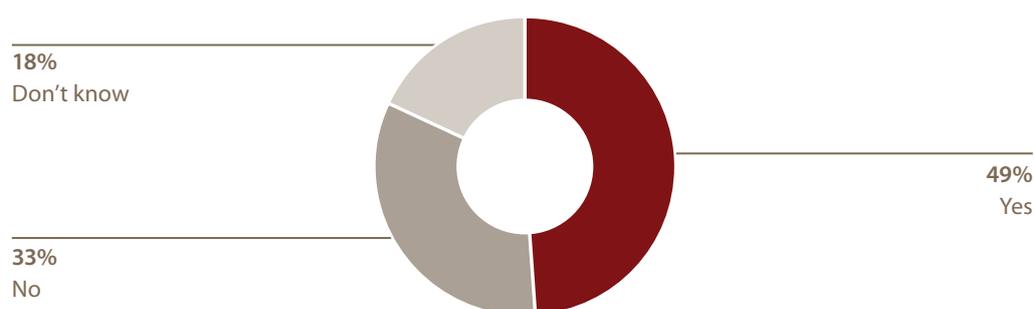
Total number of respondents: 164

Several respondents mentioned increased peer accountability for projects financed by pooled funds as a positive point. Peer accountability most often takes the form of follow-up on action points from previous meetings.

b) Accountability to affected population

Did your cluster(s) promote accountability to the affected population at countrylevel?

18%
Don't know

43%
Yes

39%
No
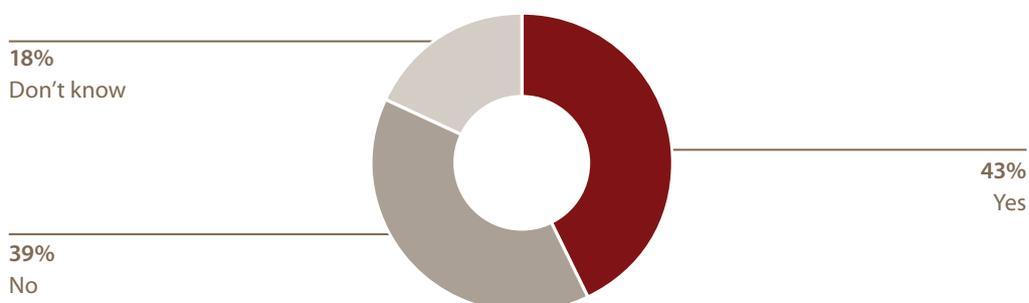
Total number of respondents: 183

Contrary to the findings of the country missions, many respondents answered this question in a positive way. Detailed answers, however, show that respondents have very different understandings of what "accountability to the affected population" means, ranging from providing assistance according to needs assessed to humanitarian organizations consulting with the government. The WASH Cluster was mentioned several times as a good example of promoting accountability to the affected population. Only two respondents mentioned that country cluster coordinators/leads advocated for better accountability, despite the fact that it is in their terms of reference.

In your view, how could accountability to the affected population be (further) strengthened through the cluster approach?

Several respondents suggested introducing a complaints mechanism either in clusters or overseen by the Humanitarian Coordinator. Others suggested providing trainings to cluster members on how to implement accountability to affected populations, done by NGOs that tend to have more experience and knowledge on participatory methods.

Provider of Last Resort

Did you experience situations where a cluster lead acted as Provider of Last Resort?

15%
Don't know the concept of POLR

13%
Don't know

26%
Yes

46%
No
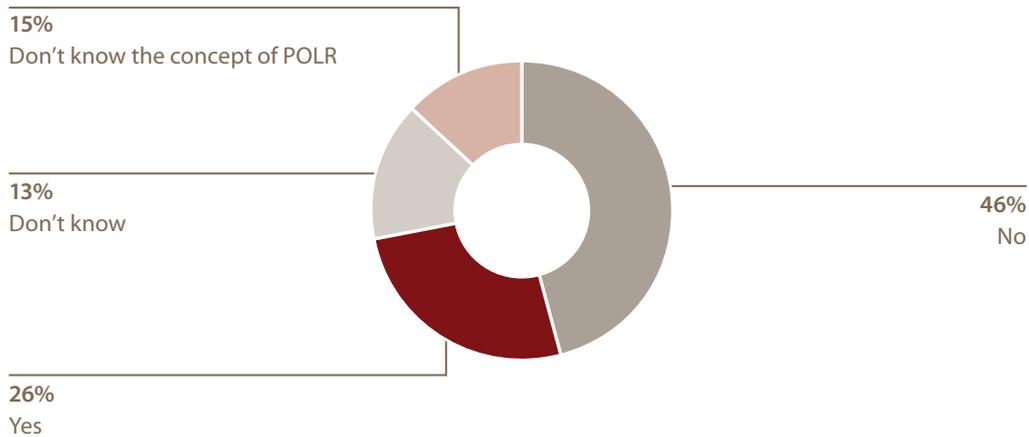
Total number of respondents: 173

What concrete steps would you suggest to further strengthen the Provider of Last Resort mechanism?

There was a feeling that clarifying the concept (including the different applications depending on the nature of the cluster) would be an important first step to strengthening the concept. Several respondents also suggested providing a special fund for situations requiring the exercise of a provider of last resort role or to institutionalize the concept further, for example through a procedure for providing an official request to lead agencies.

Hand-over and exit strategies

Did your cluster(s) have a hand-over strategy in the countries you have been working?

31%
Don't know

36%
Yes

33%
No
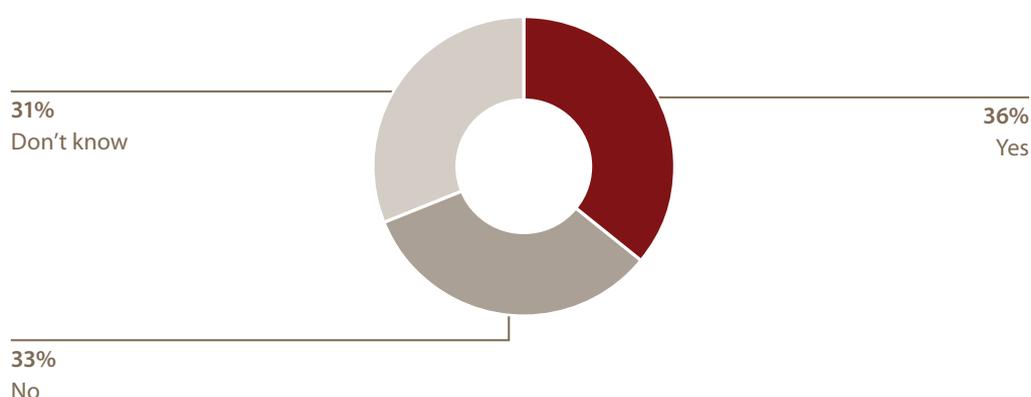
Total number of respondents: 140

How was the question of phase out/closing the cluster approached in absence of a strategy?

Most respondents indicated that they worked in protracted crisis situations and thus there were no discussions about closing down clusters. The other respondents most often explained that the question was not really addressed and that clusters just "faded away"/"died" or were "naturally transformed into mainstream recovery".

Improving information management at country level

Respondents were asked to provide ideas on how to improve information management at country level. Suggestions were sometimes very basic - several respondents indicated that information management could already be improved by having a decent cluster e-mail list and by disseminating meeting minutes to cluster members. Most of the ideas were hiring trained information managers (for example based in OCHA), having better websites, and using the 3Ws more effectively.

Clusters and funding

Did your cluster's lead agency channel funds to cluster members at country level?

23%
Don't know

46%
Yes

31%
No
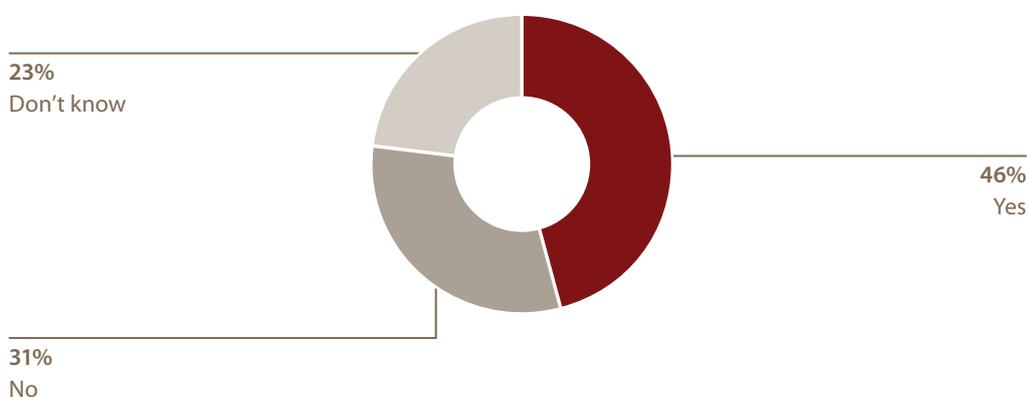
Total number of respondents: 155

How did this affect the collaboration in the cluster?

The answers to this question were very ambivalent: According to survey respondents, channeling funds through clusters either improves collaboration greatly - especially if done transparently - or severely damages relationships between organizations.

Communication between different levels

[Country level] Who do you contact for cluster-related support?

Most respondents indicated that they turn to OCHA (21) or the national cluster coordinator (12) – and thus seek support at the national rather than the global level.

[Global level] What kind of cluster-related requests do you receive from the country level?

Most cluster-related requests from the national to the global level were requests for technical advice, policies or training. Requests for surge capacity were less frequent.

[Global level] Who contacts you with such requests?

Most requests from the country level to the global level came from heads of agencies / country directors. Only very few respondents mentioned cluster coordinators seeking advice.

What would be the ideal communication channel between global and national/local clusters?

Many respondents understood this question to be about communication means (emails etc), rather than channels and mechanisms. Generally, the responses mirror that there is a need for more information on what is available from the global and regional levels and that global clusters are not sufficiently proactive. OCHA was mentioned by many respondents at the country level as the entity to channel information through. Counter-intuitively, country level cluster members called most often to make more information available online.

Annex 8

Recommendations of this report as compared to previous reports

Cluster Approach evaluation phase 2	Cluster Approach evaluation – phase 1	Discussion paper - ACF and Humanitarian Reform	Synthesis report- Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform project
Recommendation 1 **Identify existing preparedness, response and coordination mechanisms and capacities and link with/support/ complement them where appropriate**			
1 Conduct an analysis of the context, as well as existing coordination and response mechanisms and capacities. In case of sudden on-set disasters, ensure appropriate links with rapid response mechanisms	◉	○	○
2 Identify appropriate partners in national and local authorities and develop strategies for strengthening their capacities and involving them in the cluster approach.	◉ (introduce national authorities to the cluster approach concept)	○	○
3 Strengthen cooperation and coordination between clusters, national actors and development actors at every stage from preparedness to response and the transition to development	○	○	○
Recommendation 2 **Strengthen cluster management and implementation modalities**			
1 Continue to strengthen the "mainstreaming" of cluster responsibilities	◉	○	○
2 Clarify, recognize and strengthen the role of OCHA	◉	○	○
3 Strengthen the role of Humanitarian Coordinators in the cluster approach	○	◉	◉ (accountability of the cluster lead to the HC)
4 Define clear roles and responsibilities for different meetings and fora and ensure that clusters are adequately represented at the strategic level, at both the global and the country levels	○	◉ (standardising the country Clusters role and processes)	○

Cluster Approach evaluation phase 2	Cluster Approach evaluation – phase 1	Discussion paper - ACF and Humanitarian Reform	Synthesis report- Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform project
5 Reinforce the role of international NGOs in clusters	◉	○	◉ (role of co-leads at field levels and financial support for NGOs)
6 Clarify the criteria, processes and terminology for cluster implementation, transition and exit	◉ (activation in sudden-onset, guidance for closeout)	○	○
7 Provide cluster coordinators with one standard, basic cluster management handbook or tool kit	○	○	○
8 Ensure that cluster coordinators, especially at sub-national level, have sufficient time and adequate skills	◉	○	○
9 Improve information sharing and management by and among clusters	◉ (information management for inter-cluster communication)	○	○
Recommendation 3 **Enhance the focus on strengthening the quality of humanitarian response in cluster operations and activities**			
1 Ensure that clusters have a clear, operational focus	○	○	○
2 As a contribution to creating more accountability to affected populations, strengthen the role of clusters in using and promoting participatory approaches	○	◉ (accountability towards beneficiaries)	◉ (accountability towards beneficiaries)
3 Facilitate the participation of national and local NGOs and strengthen their capacities	◉ (national capacity building in chronic and recurrent emergency countries)	○	◉ (national partners)
4 Further strengthen the role of clusters in defining, adapting, using and promoting relevant standards	○	○	○
5 Engage clusters in coordinating and improving needs assessments	○	◉ (coordination on assessed needs)	○

Cluster Approach evaluation phase 2	Cluster Approach evaluation – phase 1	Discussion paper - ACF and Humanitarian Reform	Synthesis report- Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform project
6 Ensure integration of cross-cutting issues in assessments, policies, training , guidance, strategic planning and operations	⦿ (mainstreaming within lead agencies)	○	○
7 mprove mechanisms to deal with multidisciplinary issues and inter-cluster gaps	○	⦿	○
8 Further strengthen learning	⦿ (exchanges between countries)	⦿ (independent evaluations)	○
Recommendation 4 **Increase the focus of resources for the cluster approach on the local level**			
1 Strengthen training on facilitation, coordination and cross-cutting issues on the national and sub-national levels	○	○	○
2 Provide dedicated part-time or full-time coordination capacities for sub-national clusters	⦿ (full-time dedicated position at national level)	○	⦿ (dedicated cluster leadership)
3 Create reporting lines between global and national clusters and ensure that national clusters support local ones	○	○	○
4 Define decision-making procedures between national and sub-national clusters so that operational decisions can be decentralized	○	○	○
Recommendation 5 **Provide sufficient funding and define adequate ways for linking clusters and financing mechanisms**			
1 Provide adequate funding for coordination activities	⦿ (resources for cluster lead responsibilities)	⦿ (resources for NGOs involved in coordination)	○
2 Ensure adequate funding for the implementation of cluster strategies and activities "sponsored" by clusters.	○	○	○
· Strengthen the link between clusters and pooled funds	○	⦿ (standardised allocation procedures across countries)	⦿ (facilitate access by NGOs)
· Strategically create links between clusters and bilateral donors	○	○	⦿ (at the country level)

Cluster Approach evaluation phase 2	Cluster Approach evaluation – phase 1	Discussion paper - ACF and Humanitarian Reform	Synthesis report- Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform project
· Strengthen links to and the inclusion of non-traditional donors	○	○	○
3 Improve the governance of funding mechanisms to limit conflicts of interest and ensure direct access of international and local NGOs to funding and enhance the transparency of financial transactions linked to clusters	◉ (address the problems NGOs face in accessing CERF and CHF)	◉ (ensure direct funding)	◉
4 Further define and clarify what "provider of last resort" entails for different types of clusters	◉	○	○
Recommendation 6 **Resolve outstanding policy issues at the global level: i) links to peacekeeping and political missions and humanitarian space, ii) institutional issues**			
1 Develop concrete, context sensitive guidelines on the linkages between the cluster approach and peacekeeping or political missions	○	○	○
2 Strengthen decisions of Humanitarian Country Teams relating to humanitarian space	○	○	○
3 Focus the activities of global clusters on identifying and addressing conflicts and systemic incoherence in humanitarian response	○	○	○
4 Ensure that the Early Recovery Cluster at country and sub-national level focuses on and enhances its advisory function	◉	○	○
5 Finalize discussions and create a global Food Security Cluster	◉	○	○
6 Resolve conflicts relating to the governance of the Emergency Telecommunications Clusters	◉	○	○
7 Rename the 'Oneresponse' website	○	○	○

Annex 9

Terms of reference for the evaluation

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Terms of Reference

IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation, 2nd Phase
23 February 2009

The present ToR have been established based on the "Phase Two Evaluation Framework" by Jessica Alexander, February 9th 2009 approved by the Cluster Evaluation 2 Steering Group (CE2StG). This document referred to as "Framework" in the text below is an integral part of the present ToR (attached).

1 Background/Context

In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals requested an evaluation of the cluster approach after two years. The evaluation was divided into two phases, the first focusing on process indicators – the achievements and limitations of the cluster approach and lessons learned related to its roll-out. This phase was finalized in 2007 and has been widely circulated throughout the humanitarian community[83]. While improved systems typically lead to better humanitarian outcomes, the second phase aims to explicitly evaluate the cluster approach on the results it has had on improving the humanitarian response.

A Cluster Evaluation 2 Steering Group (CE2StG) comprised of stakeholders from the UN, donors, and NGOs has supervised the development of a methodological 'Framework' in close consultation with Global Clusters. The Framework states key indicators and benchmarks that are most relevant to each cluster and it will guide the entire evaluation process. The Framework should be used as an authoritative but flexible document to steer the evaluation as many stakeholders were consulted for its development and finalization.

2 Overall Objective & Purpose of the evaluation

The CE2StG agreed that the overall purpose and objectives of the evaluation are to[84]:

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83 See Cluster Approach Evaluation Final Draft. November, 2007.
84 See Revised Note on a Proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II, 28 August 2008, Cluster 2 Evaluation Steering Group, Appendix D of the Phase Two Cluster Evaluation Framework

- Assess the main outcomes[85] of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular reference to the role of the cluster approach and other components of the humanitarian reform process

- Assess the overall operational effectiveness[86] of the cluster approach (including the role of the Global Clusters) in facilitating and supporting the coordinated joint humanitarian response at country level through an analysis of common country-level findings

The CE2StG recognizes that "it will not be feasible to conduct a comprehensive assessment of impact (understood as variation of beneficiaries' conditions as a direct consequence of the cluster approach / humanitarian reform). In the context of 'operational effectiveness' the evaluation will nonetheless aim to identify whether and if so, how, the joint humanitarian response delivered through the cluster approach is contributing positively to the dignity and well-being of beneficiary populations and responding to their needs."[87]

It is expected that the evaluation will not only attempt to enhance country level operations by providing them with actionable recommendations, but that it will also inform the wider humanitarian community (including the IASC, donors, global cluster teams) by bringing the reality in the field back to decision makers.

Finally, the objective of the evaluation is also to serve as a baseline for future evaluation exercises which examine effects and/or impacts of the cluster approach, using a common set of core indicators as set forth in the attached Framework for the cluster approach.

3 Scope

Cluster Evaluation Phase I succeeded in assessing the quality of inputs being made and processes put into place by the Clusters to improve the Emergency Response Preparedness of the humanitarian system. It has done this through an intensive review of opinions as expressed by key stakeholders at the global and also at the national level. Cluster Evaluation Phase II should not repeat this, but will seek evidence about whether the critical outputs have been achieved. The evaluation will also consider any initial effects at the country level which could be linked to the application of the cluster approach.

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85 Outcome understood as likely or achieved short term and medium term effects of the response's outputs
86 Effectiveness being the extent to which operational objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance
87 See Revised Note on a Proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II, 28 August 2008, Phase II Cluster Evaluation Steering Group, Appendix D of the Phase Two Cluster Evaluation Framework

Hence, Cluster Evaluation Phase II will gather evidence from six of the countries in which the cluster approach has been rolled out and applied, about operational effectiveness as defined in the approach note[88] and more specifically about critical inputs achieved, processes put into place and outcomes as well as their effects as per the logic model presented in the Framework narrative and scheme (Framework Section III).

Based on the findings of these six country reports, a synthesis will also distill major lessons about the application of the cluster approach within the wider humanitarian reform context.

Section IV of the Framework presents the Evaluation design and the List of key indicators to be built (see also next paragraph). As mentioned in that section, there will be obvious limitations in terms of attribution especially given the lack of baseline data and any clear reference points for comparison. Moreover, the short-time frames typically associated with cluster operations at the country level further complicates the analysis of results necessitating to some degree a type of real-time approach.

Despite these limitations, the Cluster Evaluation Phase II will need to maintain a strong focus on assessing country-level results as specified in the Framework. All perceptual data will need to be adequately triangulated with other objective sources of information to the extent possible to reduce bias (e.g. survey data and direct observations). All data, where possible, should be disaggregated by gender and age.

4 Criteria and key questions

The evaluation criteria are summarized in the Evaluation Framework (Section IV Box 1) and key indicators described in the corresponding tables in this same section:

"Gap Filling" and "Coverage" are certainly the main desired outcomes of the Cluster Evaluation, together with raising "Ownership" and improve sustainability through better "Connectedness". In the logic model proposed by the Framework, this is achieved through the combined effect of improved "Leadership", "Partnerships" and enhanced "Accountability", including to beneficiaries, e.g. by ensuring that standards have been agreed upon and met.

While the approach to the evaluation should be to gather as much quantitative information in order to build the indicators as listed in the Framework (see also next section on methodology and framework section 5.1), additional information should be obtained from key stakeholders addressing general questions on the degree to

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88   same as above

which the above mentioned criteria have been met, e.g. (not exhaustive):

- What factors are contributing to/ or hindering humanitarian actors to deliver more effective and efficient assistance through the cluster approach?

- What have been the unintentional positive or negative results from the cluster approach?

- Efficiency: Have the outcomes justified the investment thus far?

- How is the cluster approach interacting with the other pillars of the humanitarian reform, in particular partnership and strengthened leadership?

- How can the cluster approach be strengthened? What further inputs are required?

- Has the cluster approach proven to be a sufficiently flexible instrument to respond to the needs of a range of contexts?

- Are there any intermediate effects or impacts that can be already be demonstrated?

These generic questions are intended to facilitate the synthesis of all country reports as described in the framework section 4.3. Further specific questions for the country clusters around effectiveness and outcomes should be defined during the initial phases of the country evaluations based on the cluster specific indicators as listed in section 4.2 of the Framework.

5 Methodology

The Cluster Evaluation Phase II will organize its approach to the above questions as elaborated and outlined in the Framework section V (and will use other existing, outcome-oriented performance frameworks and standards in the humanitarian sector used by the clusters).

The evaluation will be carried out through analyses of various data coming from different sources of information and by using various approaches including desk reviews; field visits; interviews with key stakeholders and primary clients (such as, UN and partner agencies, the donor, programme managers, etc.); and through cross-validation of data.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied to build and to further develop as necessary the established indicators as specified in the Framework section IV. This data gathering and analysis will be complemented by document

reviews and key informant interviews to confirm findings and identified trends.

Desk Review

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will carry out desk reviews of relevant literature on the cluster approach and humanitarian reform more broadly.

Field Visits

Data collection and analysis at field level will be used to assess the operational effectiveness of the clusters based on quantitative data whenever available. Where this is not possible, interviews will be held with key stakeholders and additional information gathered.

At a minimum, it is expected from the field level evaluations that they should help to collect baseline information for future evaluations examining effects and/or impacts of the cluster approach.

Consultant Company / Research Institute team members will visit the following countries selected by the CE2StG in which the cluster approach has been introduced over the past years:

Country Choice

New Emergency:	**Gaza**
Sudden Onset:	**Haiti**
"New" rollout complex emergency:	**Chad** **Myanmar**
"Old" rollout complex emergency:	**Uganda** **DRC**

The Consultant Company / Research Institute is expected to bid for all of the countries mentioned. The buyer reserves the right to attribute groups of countries to different companies according to their documented regional competencies and capacities.

Key informant interviews

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will conduct key informant interviews in each country as needed. Interviewees will be selected based on their knowledge and experience in the cluster approach, and will include: representatives of all UN agencies, funds and programs who are full or standing members of the

IASC, with an emphasis on the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs); recipient state representatives; representatives of UN peace support operations where relevant; donor governments; representatives from IOs and NGOs; and local NGOs.

The evaluators should prioritize gathering beneficiary views. Their involvement in the data collection is essential to drawing conclusions about outcomes which bear effects on their lives. In this analysis ethical considerations must be followed and special attention given to ensuring that all relevant groups (men and women, children and elders, all ethnic groups) are heard.

The Consultant Company / Research Institute should apply the norms and standards for evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (the two documents are available from the website of the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Section: http://ochaonline.un.org/esu).

6 Management arrangements

Responsibilities of the Consultant Company / Research Institute

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will: 1) report to the assigned Task Manager within OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Section and provide four review workshops to the CE2StG on draft reports; 2) bear the responsibility to organize all travel, administrative and logistical arrangements; 3) announce travel within the "field visit" countries well in advance and in a timely manner to OCHA country offices; 4) bear the costs for all travel, administrative and logistical arrangements to OCHA NY/Geneva and to the field visits; 5) undertake the evaluation described above and in the Framework, under its own administrative responsibility; 6) retain editorial responsibility over the final report.

Responsibilities of OCHA ESS & HQ CE2StG

Substantive Support:

OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) will assign an evaluation manager to oversee the conduct of the evaluation. He/she will be the main point of contact for the evaluation team. In conjunction with the CE2StG consisting of key stakeholders from the IASC and donor representation, OCHA ESS will: 1) provide guidance and input to the overall process, including feedback on the general approach for the evaluation 2) facilitate the team's access to specific information or expertise needed to perform the assessment; 3) monitor and assess the quality of the evaluation and its processes; 4) ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed; 5) comment on the inception report and draft report and provide assistance on templates and technical standards for evaluation; 6) convene and

coordinate the CE2StG, and will be responsible for compiling comments on the reports and disseminating the final report; and 7) help organize and design the final learning workshop; and 8) ensure a management response to the final report and subsequent follow up.

Preparation Mission:

OCHA ESS, in close collaboration with OCHA Country Offices, may carry out as appropriate and subject to funds availability preparatory missions to the selected countries in which the evaluation will be carried out. OCHA ESS will inform the country teams on the upcoming evaluation and assist in the preparation and collection of relevant data sources. During these missions, OCHA ESS will gather contact information of key stakeholders to be interviewed.

The OCHA ESS task manager will assist the Consultant Company / Research Institute by providing lists and contact information of the relevant agency personnel in HQs and Country Offices not included in the field visits. The Consultant Company / Research Institute will augment this list with additional contacts from the humanitarian practitioner and academic communities.

The objective will be to make the most productive use of the researchers' time in country, so that they can maximize time for data collection and analysis and engage with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.

Responsibilities of the Country-Teams

OCHA at the country level will: 1) assist OCHA ESS in providing relevant data sources and lists of key stakeholders to be interviewed; 2) help arrange meetings with key informant interviewees (UN and non-UN) during the country visits; 3) facilitate travel arrangements and logistical arrangements of the Consultant Company / Research Institute within the country; 4) allow the Consultant Company / Research Institute access to all relevant data and information, in order to carry out the evaluation.

7 Duration of the Evaluation and the tentative workplan:

Month One **May**	• Desk Review of existing documents and materials including: strategy documents, plans, proposals, monitoring data, mission reports, sitreps, previous evaluations/assessments agency/government/donor evaluations related to the actual performance of the emergency response.
	• Development of Inception Report, including a standard report structure for the country reports to facilitate the comparability and analysis
	• Consultation with global clusters (leads and member agencies) to determine:
	  • Persons to meet at country level (OCHA ESS will carry out a preparatory mission)
	  • Further insights into each cluster's operation
	  • Refinement of indicators for each cluster
	• Finalize logistics for field visits

Months Two – Five (minimum of 2 weeks per country) **June-October**	Visits to six selected countries to include consultation at field level (not just at capital). Field visits will include: • Initial introduction meeting with key stakeholders: cluster leads, HC/RC, HCT • Meetings with all clusters (leads and member agencies) present at country level and mapping any country specific outcome/effects indicators, reviewing country specific performance frameworks • Interviews with key personnel, partners, government officials, local NGOs, donors • Focus groups/interviews with beneficiaries to elicit feedback from local people on humanitarian operations • Visits to selected project/program sites areas • End visit debriefing to share broad findings with clusters and other stakeholders
Months Six **November**	• Write-up of individual country reports • Submission of first draft to steering committee and clusters who were consulted • A review workshop held in NYC or Geneva to review substantive issues emerging from the initial draft • Incorporation of comments and production of second draft • Sign off by steering committee and submission of six country reports to IASC

Months Seven – Eight **December-January**	• Write-up of synthesis report drawing from major findings/lessons from country reports • Submission of first draft to Steering Committee and Clusters • A review workshop held in NYC or Geneva to review substantive issues emerging from the initial draft • Incorporation of comments and production of second draft Sign off by Steering Committee and submission of six country reports to IASC
TOTAL	**8 Months**

Mandatory milestones for deliverables are described in section 9 of these ToR:

8 Competency and expertise requirements

This evaluation will require the services of a Consultant Company / Research Institute with the following experience and skills:

- Extensive evaluation experience of humanitarian strategies and programmes and in the area of key humanitarian issues, especially response capacity.
- In-depth knowledge of humanitarian reforms and coordination processes and issues.
- Institutional knowledge of the UN and NGO actors
- In-depth knowledge of inter-agency mechanisms at HQ and in the field, particularly in the IASC context
- Regional and relevant country-level expertise (Sub Saharian Africa, South East Asia, Latin America) and work experience with national and regional organizations.
- Excellent writing and communication skills in English is a must, knowledge of French and Spanish is recommended
- Proven expertise in facilitating different types of consultative, evaluative workshops for comparable organizations, including more complex exercises/ workshops involving a range of organizations and participants from field and headquarters
- Proven leadership in most of the above mentioned fields of work and a proven record in leading evaluation teams

The selected team should reflect, to the extent possible, regional and gender diversity and equality.

9 Technical Proposal Evaluation Criteria for the Selection of a Consultant Company / Research Institute

The evaluation criteria for the selection of a Consultant Company / Research Institute will be based on the quality and adequacy of: 1) the proposed Work Plan, the Methodology and the Approach, 2) the Expertise of the Firm / Organization and on 3) the Personnel that the consultant team will put at the disposal of the evaluation. The Consultant Company / Research Institute should take into account these selection criteria in its proposal.

(For guidance on the bidding process (i.e. commercial aspects of the proposal), please refer to the document entitled 'Request for Proposals for Services', which is attached to the TOR).

1 Proposed Work Plan, Methodology and Approach

Overall Quality:
· Is the proposal well presented, clear and concise?
· To what degree does the Proposer understand the task?

Method:
· Is the method and analytical approach logical, realistic and well defined in the presentation and reflect the correct understanding of the TOR / Evaluation Framework?

Planning:
· Is the planning and sequence of activities logical, realistic and promise efficient implementation to the project in line with the TOR / Evaluation Framework?

Scope:
· Is the scope of work well defined and does it correspond to the TOR / Evaluation Framework?

2 Expertise of Firm / Organisation Submitting Proposal

· General Organisational Capability which is likely to affect implementation (i.e. loose consortium, holding company or one firm, size of the firm / organisation, strength of project management support e.g. project financing capacity and project management controls)
· Extent to which any work would be subcontracted (subcontracting carries additional risks which may affect project implementation, but properly done it offers a chance to access specialised skills).

Relevance of:
· Specialised Knowledge of humanitarian reforms and coordination processes and issues
· Specialised Knowledge of interagency mechanisms at HQ and in the field, particularly IASC context
· Extensive evaluation experience of humanitarian strategies and programmes in the are of key humanitarian issues, especially response capacity
· Regional and relevant country-level expertise (Sub Saharian Africa, South East Asia, Latin America) and work experience with national and regional organizations
· Experience on Similar Projects

3 Personnel & Competencies

Team Leader:
· General Qualification
· Suitability for the Project:
· International Experience
· High-Level Facilitation Experience
· Profound Professional Experience in the area of the required specialisation
· In-Depth Knowledge of the regions
· Language Qualifications

Other Team Members:
· General Qualification
· Suitability for the Project:
· International Experience
· Facilitation Experience
· Professional Experience in the area of the required specialisation
· Knowledge of the regions
· Language Qualifications

10 Reporting Requirements

Quality Requirements

The quality of the evaluation report will be judged according to the UNEG Evaluation Standards and the ALNAP Quality Proforma (www.alnap.org/pdfs/ QualityProforma05.pdf).

All reports listed below will be written in good Standard English. If in the estimation of the OCHA-ESS Chief, the reports do not meet this required standard, then the consultants will ensure at their own expense the editing needed to bring it to the required standard.

The milestones indicated for the delivery of the reports and workshops are mandatory. Payments due by these milestones will be made contingent upon delivery of satisfactory products which the quality standards as described above. Due dates are indicated below:

Inception Report

An inception report outlining the proposed method, key issues and potential key informants for the evaluation, will be required. A format for the inception report will be provided by the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Section. The inception report should already elaborate a standard report structure for the country reports (see below) to facilitate the comparability and analysis for the final synthesis report (see below). The draft inception report will be reviewed and finally approved by the CE2StG.

Deadline draft: May 29th 2009
Deadline final: June 15th 2009

Six Stand-Alone Country Reports

Six stand-alone evaluation country reports, including recommendations will be produced according to the methodology developed and stated in the Framework.

Deadline first findings extracts for IASC WG: October 15th
Deadline 1st draft for CE2StG: November 16th 2009
Deadline final report: November 30th 2009

One Synthesis Report

The synthesis report will be written with a view towards assessing the overarching aims of the cluster approach. The purpose is to distill major lessons learned about the application of the cluster approach in the context of the wider humanitarian reform. Any indication of short or long term effects that can be seen should be highlighted in this tier.

This synthesis report will help to clarify underlying factors affecting the situation application, highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative), recommend actions to improve performance in both current and the roll-out of future operations, and generate lessons learned. The evaluators should attempt to uncover good practices that can demonstrate how and why certain applications of the cluster approach work in different situations. For more information on which key questions should be answered in the synthesis report, please see the Framework.

The six stand-alone reports of country level findings and recommendations and the synthesis report shall contain the elements specified in the document on standards for evaluation (pp.17-23) developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (available at: http://ochaonline.un.org/esu). All reports shall contain a short executive summary of up to 2,000 words and a main text of no more than 15,000 words, both including clear recommendations. Annexes should include a list of all persons interviewed, a bibliography, a description of the method used, as well as all other relevant material.

Deadline 1st draft for CE2StG: November 30th 2009
Deadline final report: December 14th 2009

Debriefings and Workshops

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will: 1) inform the IASC Working Group about the first findings of the six country evaluation reports in mid November 2009; 2) debrief IASC and Donors / Member States, OCHA and UN agencies at the HQ (New York/ Geneva) about the findings of the synthesis report; 3) debrief UN country teams on the country level findings before the consultant team leaves the country.

Deadline IASC WG: 11-13th November 2009
Deadline IASC member States debriefs: January 2010

The country reports shall be finalized by mid-November, in order to feed into the discussion of the IASC Working Group. The synthesis report is due by mid-January.

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11 Use of Evaluation Results

- Inform Country Teams and more specifically Country Cluster leads on main achievements as well as critical improvements needed for the coordination mechanisms and their interactions with the humanitarian financing and strengthening mechanisms put into place
- Inform Donors at appropriate fora as of completion of field missions, to help them making informed about their level of support to coordination in general and the clusters more specifically
- Inform Global Cluster leads on main achievements as well as critical improvements needed for the global support to coordination mechanisms in the context of the humanitarian reform.

12 Payment Details

The following payment modalities are proposed:

Installments upon reception of satisfactory finalized and approved products	Percentage of total amount
Inception Report	30%
Six Stand Alone Country Reports	30%
One Synthesis Report	20 %
Debriefings and Workshops	20 %