**Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level**



 Goma 2012 (Magalie Salazar)

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The cluster approach was adopted in 2005, following an independent Humanitarian Response Review, to address gaps and to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian response by building partnerships. It ensures that international responses to humanitarian emergencies are predictable and accountable and have clear leadership by making clearer the division of labour between organizations, and their roles and responsibilities in different areas. It aims to make the international humanitarian community better organized and more accountable and professional so that it can be a better partner for affected people, host Governments, local authorities, local civil society and resourcing partners.

It is to be understood, at the same time, that the cluster approach is not the only humanitarian coordination solution. In some cases, it may coexist with other forms of national or international coordination, and its application must take into account the specific needs of a country and the context. Using a cluster approach in every emergency might waste resources and impede action by Governments, which are primarily responsible for providing humanitarian assistance to people under their jurisdiction.

This module has been revised and includes field and global inputs. Two new chapters, on Clusters and Sectors, and the Role of Clusters in Preparedness, have been added. Three chapters have been significantly updated: Transition and De-activation of Clusters; Inter-Cluster Coordination; and Cluster Coordination Monitoring. Learning and case studies gathered on the components of the module will be available at <http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/>.

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Cluster coordination and the IASC Transformative Agenda

This *Cluster Coordination Reference Module* outlines the basic elements of cluster coordination in non-refugee situations.[[1]](#footnote-2) It was compiled in response to the IASC’s request to create a reference guide for practitioners that would facilitate their work and improve humanitarian outcomes. The module is one of the Transformative Agenda Protocols. It outlines key concepts and draws attention to relevant guidance. It will be reviewed periodically to take account of feedback from the field. Additional learning on themes covered in this module will be available online.[[2]](#footnote-3)

The IASC Principals reviewed humanitarian responses to several major disasters in 2010 and 2011 and pinpointed many shortcomings. Building on the 2005 Humanitarian Reform, they agreed to a set of actions in December 2011, referred to as the IASC Transformative Agenda. It focuses on improving, simplifying and clarifying the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Leadership
 | 1. Coordination
 |
| 1. Accountability
 | 1. Humanitarian Programme Cycle Components
 |
| 1. Preparedness
 |  |

This module covers key issues of cluster coordination that the IASC Transformative Agenda (TA) identified. Though it was drafted to address Level 3 (L3) emergencies, most of the TA also applies in non-L3 situations and this is particularly true of cluster coordination[[3]](#footnote-4). Protocols on other elements of the TA can be found on the IASC website.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Accountability to affected populations is the overarching objective of the TA. In December 2011, the IASC Principals agreed to integrate commitments to accountability to affected people in the policies and operational guidelines of their agencies'. The IASC also approved (as a Protocol to the TA) an Operational Framework on Accountability to Affected Populations. This describes how organizations should ensure participation, information provision, feedback, and complaint handling with affected people at country level.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Using clusters intelligently

Coordination is a means to an end. The TA affirms that the humanitarian community’s ultimate aim is to serve vulnerable people effectively, and that humanitarian organizations should be accountable to affected people for their performance. Accordingly, international coordination arrangements should adapt to the operational context, and should support national coordination efforts.[[6]](#footnote-7) The objective should be to direct as many resources as possible to meet humanitarian needs in a timely and predictable manner. Developing complicated or duplicative forms of coordination should be avoided; it is not necessary to activate all clusters in in every response. **When activation is considered, coordination mechanisms that exist in a country should be taken into account**.

The TA recognizes that Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), Resident Coordinators (RCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) should be empowered to make decisions at country level, in dialogue with national authorities. This module focuses on the cluster approach, the principal tool used by the international community to coordinate and account for its response. HCTs at country level are responsible for devising the most appropriate coordination solutions, taking into account the operational context.

**Defining cluster and emergency sectoral coordination**

# 1 Cluster and Sector Coordination

Cluster coordination ensures that international responses to humanitarian emergencies are clearly led and accountable. By this means, it aims to make the international humanitarian community a better partner for affected people.

The humanitarian community is accountable to a range of stakeholders, including national Governments, but it is fundamentally accountable to affected populations. The principal objective of international humanitarian action, and the purpose of coordination, is to meet the needs of affected people by means that are reliable, effective, inclusive, and respect humanitarian principles.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Agencies co-ordinate in a range of contexts and a variety of coordination mechanisms may be called ‘clusters’. This section examines the role of clusters that are *formally activated* in the context of emergencies. It does not examine development coordination or emergency coordination in general.

**Formally activated clusters**[[8]](#footnote-9) are a temporary coordination solution. They are created when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained in their ability to respond to identified needs in line with humanitarian principles.[[9]](#footnote-10) A cluster is accountable to the Humanitarian Co-ordinator (HC) through the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) as well as to national authorities.

**Emergency, or crisis sectoral coordination** mechanisms, for the purposes of this description, are led by Governments and report to designated Government bodies. The lifespan of emergency sector coordination is defined by Government policy or declaration. International humanitarian support can augment national capacity, underpinned by the principles of the cluster approach

The name of a coordination mechanism does not matter, but **a formally activated cluster** **has specific** **characteristics and accountabilities**.[[10]](#footnote-11) This said, regardless of which mechanism is chosen, the needs that coordination must address and the coordination functions in emergencies are the same.

The life cycle of cluster- and sector-coordination mechanisms

The table below compares cluster coordination in three different situations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Coordination Mechanism | Emergency Phase | Recovery Phase |
| Government has coordination capacity | Government provides leadership. International partners can reinforce the Government’s coordination capacity. | Government leadership continues. Humanit-arian coordination structures may transition to recovery and to development structures. Inter-national actors withdraw or support recovery, and help to prepare for future crises. |
| Government has limited coordination capacity  | Clusters are activated where needed. Where possible, co-leadership with Government bodies and NGO partners is strongly encouraged.  | Clusters are de-activated or devolve to national emergency or recovery and development coordination structures, where possible. Government coordination is strengthened, where possible. |
| Formally Activated Clusters are in place | Activated clusters continue. New clusters may be formed (after review of coordination and response needs) and their capacity augmented. | Clusters are de-activated, or transition to pre-crisis cluster structure. Government coordination is strengthened where needed. |

The table below compares activated clusters and sectoral emergency coordination.

A decision to activate clusters may be made when a Government’s capacity to coordinate is limited or constrained. However, extra international coordination capacity may be valuable even when a Government is able to lead and coordinate a response.

Comparison of characteristics and accountabilities of clusters and sectors

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Activated Cluster | Sectoral Emergency Coordination |
| Leadership  | The designated Cluster Lead Agency (or agencies) leads and manages the cluster. Where possible, it does so in co-leadership with Government bodies and NGOs. Strong links should be made with development coordination bodies to ensure that early recovery approaches are aligned with national development objectives and that steps are taken to strengthen national preparedness and response capacity.  | National Government or a designated national agency leads the sector. International humanitarian support can augment national capacity, underpinned by the principles of the cluster approach.  |
| Accountability | A Cluster Lead Agency is accountable for its cluster performance to the HC and ERC, as well as to national authorities and affected people. Performance is measured in terms of needs met, achievement of SRP objectives, and respect for national and humanitarian law and principles.  | Government is accountable for the quality of the response, and for acting in accordance with national and humanitarian law and principles. |
| Provider of Last Resort (POLR) | Where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, the cluster lead, as POLR, must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil critical gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-led HCT Strategic Response Plan (revision to 2008 definition underlined).  | As stated in General Assembly resolution 46/182, national authorities have the primary responsibility for taking care of victims of natural disasters and other emergencies that occur in their territory.[[11]](#footnote-12) |
| Lifespan | Activated clusters are temporary and subject to regular review (see Sections 3 and 11). | Long term; structures are defined by the Government. |
| Mainstreaming of protection, early recovery strategies, and cross-cutting issues | The cluster lead agency is responsible for ensuring that protection and early recovery strategies, and cross-cutting issues, are mainstreamed into programming.  | International partners can advise Government on mainstreaming. International partners have a duty to respect internationally agreed principles, and align their programming to national policies, guidance and standards. |
| Human resources for coordination | The Cluster Lead Agency will provide cluster staff to meet needs, including the need for coordination and information management. | Government bodies are responsible for ensuring that sufficient coordination capacity is available.  |
| Technical support  | Relevant cluster members or the CLA in-country, or the Global Cluster, may provide technical support and guidance. | In-country agencies or the relevant global cluster may provide technical support and guidance as needed, when capacity and resources allow.  |
| Role of Global Clusters in preparedness | Global clusters do not restrict their support to formally activated clusters. If there is a high level of risk, they may support other humanitarian coordination and response structures. The IASC Emergency Directors Group assesses risk, using the IASC’s Early Warning Early Action Report (See Section 6).[[12]](#footnote-13) |

# 2 Cluster Activation

Cluster activation occurs when an HCT decides to establish clusters as part of an international emergency response, after consulting national partners. The decision is based on an analysis of humanitarian need and coordination capacity on the ground.[[13]](#footnote-14)

The IASC Principals agreed that activation of clusters should be **strategic, should not be automatic, and should be time limited**. The RC/HC should recommend the activation of clusters only when an identified coordination need is not being addressed. The ideal approach is to support sectoral crisis coordination through *national* mechanisms. Decisions on whether to activate a cluster should therefore consider the existing crisis coordination mechanisms already in place.

The formal activation of clusters provides clear leadership and accountability in the key sectors of an international humanitarian response. The aim is to strengthen rather than replace sectoral coordination, under the overall leadership of the HC, and to improve international coordination in support of the national response. To ensure that clusters continue to operate only while they are strictly needed, plans to deactivate and transition clusters should be prepared as soon as possible after activation[[14]](#footnote-15) (see section 3). Building the capacity of local partners and Government should be an objective from the outset. Formal activation may be difficult to implement in circumstances where Government capacity is constrained[[15]](#footnote-16) and different ways of augmenting coordination and response capacity may therefore need to be found. These should still be underpinned by the principles of the cluster approach.

When a cluster is not activated, it does not mean that the sector concerned is not a priority. It implies that the Government is leading coordination in that sector.

Criteria for cluster activation

The criteria for cluster activation are met when:

1. Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.
2. Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles[[16]](#footnote-17) (due to the scale of need, the number of actors involved, adoption of a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or other constraints on the ability to respond or apply humanitarian principles).

Activation procedures

The procedure for activating a cluster or clusters is as follows:

1. The RC/HC and Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs), supported by OCHA, consult national authorities to establish what humanitarian coordination mechanisms exist, and their capacity.[[17]](#footnote-18)
2. Global CLAs are alerted by their representatives in the country and by OCHA before the UNCT/HCT meets to discuss activation, to ensure that they can be represented appropriately during the discussion at the UNCT/HCT.[[18]](#footnote-19)
3. The RC/HC agrees with the UNCT/HCT which clusters should be activated, assisted by analysis of the situation and preparedness planning.[[19]](#footnote-20) In each case, the decision should be based on a clear rationale and take into account humanitarian needs and national coordination capacity.
4. In consultation with the HCT, the RC/HC selects CLAs based on agencies’ coordination and response capacity, operational presence, and ability to scale up. The selection of CLAs ideally mirrors global arrangements; but this is not always possible and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead.[[20]](#footnote-21) Shared leadership should be considered as set out in Section 10.
5. When the HCT reaches agreement, the RC/HC writes to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) outlining the recommended cluster arrangements, suggesting CLAs, and explaining why particular clusters need to be activated. Where non-cluster coordination solutions have also been agreed, these are described too.
6. The ERC transmits the proposal to the IASC Principals and shares it with the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and Global Cluster Lead and Co-Lead Agencies for approval within 24 hours, and informs the RC/HC accordingly. The Principals may ask the EDG to discuss in more detail, if necessary.
7. When decisions on clusters and lead agencies are approved, the RC/HC informs relevant partners.

Integrating early recovery

An Early Recovery Adviser may be appointed to assist the RC/HC to manage inter-cluster issues that arise in the context of early recovery. An Adviser can help to mainstream early recovery across clusters effectively, and ensure that multidisciplinary issues (which cannot be tackled by individual clusters alone) are addressed through inter-cluster coordination mechanisms.

Thematic early recovery issues (such as emergency employment, community infrastructure, or restoration of local government) may not be covered by existing clusters or alternative mechanisms. When this is so, the RC/HC may recommend that additional clusters are established to deal specifically with such themes, in addition to the inter-cluster coordination of early recovery.

Cluster activation and the IARRM

The Transformative Agenda affirms there must be sufficient capacity amongst operational humanitarian organisations to rapidly deploy (within 72 hours of the onset of a crisis) the immediate components necessary to address the inter-agency coordination functions required for a Level 3 (L3) system-wide or other large scale response as determined by the IASC Principals.

The **Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism** (IARRM) was established to meet this commitment; its functions are described in a TA Protocol.[[21]](#footnote-22) The IARRM is a composite of the individual rapid response capacities of agencies, not a stand-alone integrated team. IASC agencies undertake to maintain a roster of senior experienced staff qualified to work in L3 crises who can be deployed rapidly to assist HCTs to define and implement a humanitarian response.

The IARRM can provide coordination support to clusters, but also broader coordination support (for example, to the office of the RC/HC, to manage relationships with partners including NGOs, to assist with strategic planning, or to provide security expertise). Activation of the IARRM does not imply activation of all or any clusters. The final responsibility for activating clusters rests with the RC/HC in consultation with the HCT.

The support offered via the IARRM takes into account the context of the response, capacity on the ground and logistical and access considerations.

#

What does transition and de-activation of clusters mean?

# 3 Cluster Transition and De-activation

**Cluster** **deactivation** is the closure of a formally activated cluster. De-activation includes the transfer of core functions (in line with the *Cluster Reference Module*) from clusters that have international leadership and accountability to sectors or structures that are led nationally.[[22]](#footnote-23) Functions may be transferred to existing or pre-crisis coordination and response structures, or new ones.

**Cluster transition** refers to the process (and potentially the activities) by means of which the transfer of leadership and accountabilities is planned and implemented, leading to de-activation. A plan is required to map phases in the transition, set transition or de-activation benchmarks for each phase, and schedule activities to meet them.

**Why do we need to de-activate?**

As noted in Section 2, a cluster is time-bound and is not formed automatically; it is created to fill a specific coordination gap in a humanitarian response, and should dissolve when that gap no longer exists. It is therefore important to review the need for clusters regularly, both to respect humanitarian principles and promote forms of humanitarian action and coordination that, wherever possible, are led nationally.

Periodic reviews of the cluster architecture make sure that clusters adapt to changing circumstances and remain light, efficient, effective and fit for purpose.[[23]](#footnote-24) They also ensure that clusters make timely plans to transfer leadership and accountabilities to national or other structures; and design transition processes and, where necessary, activities to build capacity in relevant areas.

Where clusters are not formally activated, it is strongly recommended to carry out regular reviews of cluster/sector humanitarian coordination architecture for the same rationale.

**What criteria need to be met for de-activation?**

As noted in Section 2, activation is considered in circumstances where response and coordination gaps exist, and national response or coordination capacity cannot meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles.[[24]](#footnote-25)

The de-activation of formally activated clusters may therefore be considered when at least one of the conditions that led to its activation is no longer present:

1. The humanitarian situation improves, significantly reducing humanitarian need and therefore associated response and coordination gaps.
2. National structures acquire sufficient capacity to coordinate and meet residual humanitarian needs in line with humanitarian principles.

Decisions are made by the HCT at country level, against agreed benchmarks and in consultation with national authorities.

**Principles for planning for transition and de-activation?**

**Five principles** should guide and inform transition and de-activation processes.

1. **They are initiated and led by the HC and HCT, wherever possible in close collaboration with national authorities and supported by OCHA**. CLAs, cluster partners and national counterparts should also be involved in drafting and agreeing the review and its recommendations, and preparing transition or de-activation plans.
2. **They focus on the ability to lead and be accountable for cluster functions** (as defined by this module) in line with humanitarian principles, and on **residual humanitarian needs**. Cluster functions can also be used to build capacity. While the HC, HCT and CLAs continue to operate, they are responsible for ensuring that preparedness actions are carried out (as outlined in Section 6).
3. **They are based on assessment of national capacity**,[[25]](#footnote-26) including:
* The presence, structure and resources of relevant response and coordination mechanisms. Where clusters are able to hand over to natural counterparts, transition will be easier and probably faster.
* The scale of residual or continued humanitarian needs, and the ability of successor mechanisms to respond in line with humanitarian principles.
1. **They take account of the context.** De-activation in sudden onset crises may be more rapid than in complex or protracted emergencies.
* Not all clusters must be de-activated at the same time; the timing of de-activation is related to ongoing need and the presence or absence of national structures competent to manage the functions in question.
* The functions of some clusters (for example, protection or WASH) are likely to be transferred to a variety of national structures.
* The probability of recurring or new disasters (and the costs of closure and subsequent re-establishment) may outweigh the benefits of de-activation, especially if investments have been made in capacity-building and preparedness.
* De-activation can also be induced by a Government declaration that an emergency is over, shifting the focus to recovery and development coordination structures.
1. **They are guided by early recovery objectives.** Integrating early recovery objectives in transition and de-activation plans ensures that humanitarian actors consider the sustainability of their response, take steps to build national and local capacity, emphasize preparedness, and support long-term recovery and development objectives. Where feasible, clusters should share cluster leadership with national actors, and work with national counterparts to build their capacity to assume coordination roles in humanitarian preparedness and response as well as recovery and development. Care should be taken to avoid transferring leadership before capacity is in place.

**Merging of clusters.**

There have been several examples of non-service clusters being merged at country level either during the activation process where it has seemed prudent to group related clusters in that specific context, or in the transition process as a way of streamlining the cluster system.  Merging has had mixed results and it should be noted that a merged cluster should not be used as a mechanism to coordinate for all areas of response which lack a formally activated cluster.  Particular attention should be taken to define accountabilities and roles of the lead agencies if a merged cluster is created, and how support will be provided by the global clusters. The merging of clusters has not yet been discussed at a policy level.

**What happens to appeal processes during transition and de-activation?**

De-activation of a cluster does not mean that humanitarian financing is no longer required. Transitional activities, including capacity-building, can be included in budgets to meet core cluster functions. Financing may be required to enable national and other authorities to coordinate action to meet residual or continued humanitarian needs or strengthen preparedness.[[26]](#footnote-27) To participate in a humanitarian appeals process, it is not necessary to be a formally activated cluster. Nor is lack of funding a reason to de-activate a cluster.

**How do accountabilities change during transition and de-activation?**

During a transition process, the line of accountability for core cluster functions and responsibilities (such as Provider of Last Resort) must be clearly articulated. While a cluster is formally activated, accountability remains with the CLA.[[27]](#footnote-28) Transition plans should outline how accountabilities will shift to Government or to other crisis-coordination mechanisms.[[28]](#footnote-29)

Clusters and sectors continue to be responsible for establishing preparedness, in line with Section 8 on the Role of Clusters in Preparedness.

**When does review of cluster coordination architecture take place?**

The table below summarizes the recommendations of TA Protocols for review of cluster coordination architecture, transition and de-activation of in three different contexts.[[29]](#footnote-30)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Context** | **Review** | **Implications** |
| 1. New Emergency
 | Within three months. Review the cluster coordination architecture to ensure it is fit for purpose. | The HC/HCT should ensure that clusters have developed an outline of a transition or de-activation strategy at 90 days after activation. |
| 1. Level 3 crisis
 | (In addition to the above)Within three weeks of an L3 declaration. Draft an L3 Exit Strategy.[[30]](#footnote-31) | The HC/HCT should prepare a plan for transitioning out of L3, and report to ERC. It should make plans to replace or demobilize IARRM surge capacity. |
| 1. Protracted Crises
 | **Annually.** Review the cluster coordination architecture to ensure it is fit for purpose.[[31]](#footnote-32) Do this more often if strategic response plans are revised to reflect changes in the humanitarian context.[[32]](#footnote-33)Where possible, review before the start of new strategic planning and resource mobilization cycles. | The HC reports annually to the ERC on review results, the rationale for structures, and any plans for transition or de-activation.Previous versions of the transition/de-activation plans are updated based on the annual review. |

OCHA will coordinate with HC/RCs to ensure timely reviews of cluster coordination architecture.

Good practice suggests that the HC/HCT, clusters and national authorities should develop transition and de-activation strategies at the start of a response. Immediate transition steps may include:

1. Involve national counterparts and development partners in coordination and strategic planning from the outset.
2. Establish strong links between humanitarian and development coordination bodies to ensure that recovery approaches are aligned with national development objectives and strengthen national preparedness and response capacity.
3. Where possible, introduce co-leadership arrangements with national authorities for clusters, during the activation process or as early as possible.

A review can also lead to the activation of new clusters.

**How is a cluster coordination architecture review carried out? How long does it take?**

Cluster architecture reviews should:

1. Be initiated by the HC/HCT and supported by OCHA.
2. Involve cluster lead agencies, cluster partners and national counterparts.
3. Keep Global Clusters informed.
4. Be guided and informed by the five principles outlined above.

The HC/HCT have some room to decide how best to carry out a cluster architecture review. The type and duration of an emergency, and initial assessments of national capacity, will influence its comprehensiveness and length. In all cases, however, clear and feasible handover plans should be considered from an early date; and they should include proposals for strengthening the capacity of local partners. Supported by OCHA, the ERC monitors reviews of cluster coordination architecture globally.

**When preparing transition and de-activation plans, a cluster should**:

1. Map preparedness arrangements, and response and coordination needs (based on the six cluster functions listed in Section 4 of this Module).
2. Identify Government and other coordination-and-response mechanisms that are competent to assume leadership and accountability for the cluster’s functions, noting that responsibilities and accountabilities may pass to a range of officials or institutions and that not all need to be transferred at the same time.
3. Assess the capacity of these mechanisms to assume responsibility.
4. Determine what must be done over what period to build capacity, during the transition or to enable de-activation.
5. Assess whether the criteria are met for creating new clusters.
6. Define how CLAs and national counterparts are accountable for cluster functions during transition and de-activation, and take steps to ensure accountability is preserved. Set benchmarks to indicate phased transitions towards de-activation.
7. Propose a timetable for transition or de-activation.
8. Propose a timetable for additional cluster reviews as appropriate.
9. Decide how preparedness will be maintained or strengthened after de-activation (in line with Section 6) and define any continued role for the CLA.

**Role of Global Clusters**

When a review occurs, Global Clusters support the process and share lessons learned. They should be involved in planning reviews and should be kept informed at every stage. The HC or OCHA office in-country can seek support from OCHA globally to make sure that the review takes account of current learning.

**Is there an agreed process to formalise cluster coordination review proposals?**

When a review has taken place and proposals have been agreed, the following should happen:

1. Under the HC’s leadership and in close collaboration with national authorities, the HCT notes if clusters should (i) continue as they are, (ii) be expanded, (iii) be streamlined, or (iv) transition, with a plan and benchmarks for deactivation.
2. The HC provides the ERC and national authorities a summary of the review and proposals for any changes, changes or transfers in accountability, any continuing role for the CLAs and how preparedness will be continued in any new structures .[[33]](#footnote-34)
3. The ERC transmits the summary to the IASC Principals, and shares with the Emergency Directors Group (EDG), Global Cluster Lead Agencies, and Co-lead agencies for approval, allowing at least ten days for consultation when a rapid response is not necessary. The Principals may ask the EDG to discuss reviews in more detail if necessary.
4. Once approved, the HC informs relevant partners of the arrangements that have been agreed.

# 4 Cluster Functions

**“Coordinators need to spend less time and attention on sophisticated approaches, and devote more time to improving and practicing the basic functions of managing coordination. We need to get back to the fundamentals, and build from there.”**

Valerie Amos, ERC, February 2012.

Refocus on clusters’ purpose

The IASC Principals “agreed there is a need to restate and return to the original purpose of clusters, refocusing them on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results”.[[34]](#footnote-35) The aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response.[[35]](#footnote-36) At country level, it aims to strengthen partnerships, and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations.

Focusing on the core functions

Consequently, the **core functions** of a cluster at country level are:

1. To support service delivery by
	* Providing a platform that ensures service delivery is driven by the Strategic Response Plan[[36]](#footnote-37) and strategic priorities.
	* Developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery.
2. To inform the HC/HCT’s strategic decision-making by
	* Preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within sectors, using information management tools as needed).
	* Identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues.
	* Formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.
3. To plan and develop strategy by
	* Developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the response’s strategic priorities.
	* Applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines.
	* Clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC’s overall humanitarian funding proposals.
4. To monitor and evaluate performance by
	* Monitoring and reporting on activities and needs.
	* Measuring performance against the cluster strategy and agreed results.
	* Recommending corrective action where necessary.
5. To build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning (see Section 8).
6. Advocacy
	* Identifying concerns that contribute to HC and HCT messaging and action.
	* Undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.

Detailed ToRs list the responsibilities and accountability of Cluster Coordinators, CLAs and HCs. Guidance also exists for HCTs.[[37]](#footnote-38)

# 5 Cluster Management Arrangements

This section covers the organization and coordination of the various cluster components (the CLA, the Cluster Coordinator and all cluster participants at national and sub-national level). If a cluster is to fulfil its core functions, it is important to balance the need for consultation and the need for leadership in an emergency. Key decisions need to have legitimacy and to be taken by a manageable number of partners.

Effective and efficient cluster management is a shared responsibility

A well-run cluster is one of the **formal deliverables** of CLAs in order to deliver an effective strategic response and forms part of that agency’s work.[[38]](#footnote-39) However, in practice the IASC and donors have recognized that the efficient management or functioning of clusters is a **joint responsibility** of the CLA, the Cluster Coordinator, resourcing partners and all participants in national and sub-national clusters.

Eligibility to participate in the more strategic management work of a cluster is based on the following criteria:[[39]](#footnote-40)

1. Operational relevance in the emergency.
2. Technical expertise.
3. Demonstrated capacity to contribute strategically and to provide practical support.
4. Commitment to contribute consistently.

During an emergency, clusters are expected to cooperate with national authorities, accept their leadership, and support national capacity wherever it is feasible and appropriate.

Characteristics of a well-managed cluster

Efficient cluster management should:

* Monitor performance of the six core cluster functions (see Section 4), making sure that programmes clearly contribute to the implementation of evidence-based strategic objectives and are based on sound field practices and agreed international benchmarks and standards.
* Establish and maintain an appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanism, which:
	+ Strengthens pre-existing sectoral coordination by increasing predictability and accountability.
	+ Reinforces the complementarity of partner actions by avoiding duplication and gaps.
	+ Advocates for adequate resources and ensures that resources are allocated according to agreed priorities and in a manner that fulfils the cluster response plan.
	+ Ensures effective and comprehensive integration of relevant cross-cutting issues, including age, gender, environment and HIV/AIDs; links with specific advisers where available and identifies in-cluster focal points.
	+ Ensures protection is mainstreamed and integrated.
* Maintain the cluster’s responsiveness to changes in the operating environment and in requirements, capacity, and participation.
* Ensure that information is effectively transferred between cluster members and to and from other stakeholders, and is well used.
* Cooperate with other clusters (including through inter-cluster coordination forums) and with humanitarian actors, Government counterparts, and relevant authorities (as appropriate) in planning, coordination, and operational activities.
* Be accountable to affected people, by ensuring that women, men, girls and boys have equal opportunity to participate throughout the programme cycle, including by means of feedback mechanisms that are inclusive and consultative.
* No one-size-fits-all approach to cluster management

There is no single approach to cluster management. Because disasters (and clusters) vary in scale and complexity, management of clusters must be adapted to the situation, and may need to change as a response evolves.

On the basis of experience, nevertheless, the IASC has approved several models of cluster management. In 2011, IASC Principals agreed that “participation in clusters should be better defined and managed to enhance the ability of clusters to provide strategic direction, including, where appropriate, through the creation of small ‘Steering Committees’ (SC) or ‘Strategic Advisory Groups’ (SAG) of key operational partners, complemented by separate forums or mechanisms to ensure broader information exchange for all cluster/sector partners, as has been implemented by some clusters at country level”.[[40]](#footnote-41)

Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

Often chaired by the Cluster Coordinator, SAGs develop and adjust a cluster’s strategic framework, priorities and work plan. A SAG’s membership should represent the overall cluster partnership, but should also be limited to improve effectiveness and efficiency. A SAG is expected to interact with its broader cluster membership to ensure a regular flow of information.

SAG Member/Invitee Options

|  |
| --- |
| **Possible SAG Members** |
| **National Level** | **Sub-National Level** |
| * Cluster Coordinator.
* Government (technical) representatives.
* National NGO technical experts.
* International NGO technical experts.
* Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement technical experts.[[41]](#footnote-42)
* UN agency technical experts.
* OCHA (inter-cluster).
 | The national-level SAG should determine whether sub-national management is needed, taking account of the context. (See the section on sub-national coordination.)Its membership does not need to mirror that of national clusters and often includes more representatives of local authorities and NGO partners. |
| **Potential Invitees** (as appropriate) |
| Sub-national cluster focal points.Donor representatives.Regional focal points with technical expertise based at regional level.Military representatives and other authorities, as appropriate. |

Technical Working Groups

Technical Working Groups (TWiGs or TWGs) are small, task oriented and time limited. They are created as needed, for example to agree minimum standards and formulate appropriate technical practices, and they advise the SAG. TWiGs are coordinated by a focal point or technical adviser, and are composed of relevant technical experts.

# 6 Sub-National Coordination

Sub-national coordination occurs when national coordination is decentralized and clusters/sectors are established in zones of special operational importance. Structures may be established at more than one administrative level if required (in both provinces and districts, for example, as in Pakistan), though it remains a firm underlying principle that the number of coordination structures should be minimized. Sub-national coordination is critical when responses take place in remote areas (such as parts of Sudan) or extend over a large territory (as in DRC).

Importance of sub-national coordination

Humanitarian operations that employ national and sub-national clusters have been found to be more effective than ones that coordinate through a single national cluster. Though sub-national coordination structures may vary across regions, they should facilitate decentralized decision-making and shorten response time. They are also in a better position to

* Adapt standards to local circumstances.
* Work closely with local authorities and international, national and local NGOs.
* Implement the strategic plan, and cross-cutting and multidimensional issues.
* Strengthen accountability to affected people.

Assessment and strategic planning start at sub-national level. Different regions may have different needs and therefore different strategic objectives and prioritization.

Sub-national cluster establishment

The establishment of sub-national clusters should be formalized in ToRs (endorsed by the national CLA). TORs should be framed in terms of clusters’ core functions and should establish clear lines of accountability between national and sub-national clusters. Inter-cluster coordination at sub-national level may require dedicated support. In some cases, a sub-national HCT (with cluster representation) has replaced an inter-cluster forum.[[42]](#footnote-43)

Depending on available resources and the operational context, sub-national clusters should make cluster staff available to meet cluster needs, including for coordination and information management. Sub-national clusters also offer opportunities for humanitarian partners and national authorities to share cluster leadership.

In some cases, more capacity and seniority are needed at sub-national level, close to operations, than at national level; experience has shown that clusters at capital level have not always been needed.[[43]](#footnote-44) As with all clusters, sub-national clusters should only be established on the basis of operational needs and should be deactivated as soon as those needs are met, or when local coordination capacity is adequate. Sub-national clusters do not need to mirror the national structure.

Relationship between national and sub-national clusters

National-level clusters should provide support and policy direction to sub-national clusters. Ideally, national meetings should take place after sub-national ones, and both should produce a reliable record of decisions. The links between sub-national and national clusters should:

* Facilitate reporting, information-sharing and collaboration with national and other sub-national clusters.
* Promote the coherence of national programming and overall coordination.
* Help to track trends.
* Identify shared and common concerns in operational areas.
* Develop more upstream advocacy and programming strategies.

**7 Inter-Cluster Coordination**

**Definition and purpose**

Inter-cluster coordination is a cooperative effort among sectors/clusters[[44]](#footnote-45) and the HCT to assure coherence in achieving common objectives, avoiding duplication and ensuring areas of need are prioritized. Inter-cluster coordination takes places at the national and sub-national level to coordinate the implementation of the response through each step of the humanitarian program cycle.

The HC and HCT provide an overall strategic direction to the humanitarian community in support of the national response. Guided by the HCT, inter-cluster coordination provides a platform for clusters to work together to advance the objective of delivering assistance to affected people effectively and efficiently. It does this by encouraging synergies between sectors, ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, closing potential gaps and eliminating duplication. Inter-cluster coordination plays a central role in facilitating the development of the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) and assures a coherent and coordinated approach to planning and operationalizing the shared strategic objectives as set out in the SRP[[45]](#footnote-46).

**Inter-cluster coordination and linkages between HCT and Clusters**

The RC/HC and HCT, supported by OCHA, determine the shape and functions of inter-cluster coordination during a crisis.

Delivering an effective response and achieving the strategic objectives requires continuous two-way communication between the HCT and clusters. The link between the HCT and clusters is necessary to ensure the HCT is advised of critical operational developments impacting the overall response and that clusters receive overall strategic guidance from the HCT in relation to the evolving context. OCHA supports this communication and facilitates inter-cluster coordination by providing direct support, facilitation and secretariat services as determined by the RC/HC and HCT.

The diagram below conceptualises how these different linkages are made.



**Coordination of inter-cluster response and operational issues**

Inter-cluster coordination supports clusters to work together to facilitate the delivery of the SRP’s strategic objectives in the most efficient and effective way[[46]](#footnote-47). This coordination among clusters also helps in the identification of core advocacy concerns emerging from the operational response and the identification of resource gaps impacting operational delivery.

|  |
| --- |
| Illustrative examples A. Inter-cluster Response Issues |
|  Inter-cluster Response Issue |  **Main Clusters Potentially Concerned** |
| Malnutrition. | Nutrition, WASH, Food Security, Health. |
| Cholera. | Health, WASH, Shelter, CCCM. |
| Host family support | Shelter, WASH, Protection, CCCM and Food Security. |
| Mental health and psycho-social support. | Health protection, education. |
| Early recovery strategies - rubble removal. | Shelter, Logistics, Protection. |
| Population movement. | CCCM, Protection and Potentially all Clusters. |
| Cash transfer programming.[[47]](#footnote-48) | Potentially all Clusters. |

Some global clusters propose checklists to help country clusters identify issues that they need to clarify to avoid gaps or duplication.[[48]](#footnote-49) [[49]](#footnote-50)

|  |
| --- |
| B. Inter-cluster Operational Response Issues |
|  Operational Issues | **Main Clusters Potentially Concerned** |
| Health and hygiene promotion: clarity of roles and synergies, no overlap in content and outreach work. | Health, Nutrition, WASH. |
| Scheduling distributions, vaccination campaigns, combining these with other interventions. | Food, Health, WASH, Nutrition, Logistics. |
| Humanitarian access. | Protection and potentially all clusters. |
| Links with Government. | Potentially all clusters. |
| Cash transfer programmes. To agree value of cash grants, cash for work rates, links with safety-net structures. | Potentially all clusters. |

**Services and activities that support the right environment for effective inter-cluster coordination**

|  |
| --- |
| Inter-cluster Services and Activities Supporting an Enabling Environment. |
|  Enablers |  **Inter-cluster Services/Activities** |
| Common standards and approaches. | Sphere Core Standards; feedback mechanisms for affected people; needs assessment. |
| Information management tools. | 4W matrix, web platforms, mapping, market information, monitoring.[[50]](#footnote-51) |
| Needs assessment. | Multi-sector/cluster rapid assessments. |
| Cluster coordination monitoring. | Cluster performance monitoring; annual cluster coordination reviews (of architecture). |

**Improving links between clusters and HCTs on a strategic level**

**Examples of how Clusters can work more closely with their HCT**

The table below lists actions that may assist clusters and HCTs to communicate and cooperate effectively in the pursuit of strategic objectives.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| 1. HC or designate chairs inter-cluster coordination meetings on specific issues.
 | 1. Cluster Coordinators influence HCT discussions via their CLA representative.
 |
| 1. The HC consults Cluster Coordinators and CLAs at specific intervals, for example, at regular monthly meetings.
 | 1. Specific HCT members are assigned to support planning, implementation and monitoring of specific strategic objectives.
 |
| 1. Specific Cluster Coordinators attend HCT meetings on thematic issues to provide technical and operational expertise.
 | 1. The chair of the inter-cluster fora participates in the HCT, to provide a link between the HCT and clusters.
 |
| 1. Cluster and inter cluster meetings are sequenced, enabling them to feed issues into the HCT’s agenda effectively.
 | 1. The HC assigns mentors from the HCT to support Cluster Coordinators (outside their CLAs).
 |
| 1. The HCT and inter-cluster meetings share notes of their meetings.
 | 1. HC/HCT members visiting field and meeting with sub-national ICCTs.
 |

**OCHA’s role and responsibilities for inter-cluster coordination**

OCHA provides capacity at an appropriate level to support inter-cluster coordination, as determined by the HC/HCT, working closely with CLAs. It:

* Supports and facilitates inter-cluster coordination in relation to the HCT, Strategic Objectives, and across all clusters, and will support inter-cluster coordination forums or mechanisms as requested by the HC/HCT.
* Ensures that all clusters and other relevant national and international operational actors are fully involved in strategic planning, implementation and other key issues that arise during inter-cluster coordination forums.
* Assists clusters to deliver components of the humanitarian programme cycle. (Examples include coordinated multi-sectoral needs assessments, analysis and recommendations for prioritization, and the SRP (see Annex 1).)
* Facilitates and supports inter-cluster coordination to plan and implement strategic objectives.
* Assists HC/HCT to define and put in place appropriate coordination mechanisms at all levels, including decentralized coordination via sub-national clusters or sectors in zones of operational importance.
* Supports protection main-streaming efforts at the inter-cluster level in close collaboration with the Protection Cluster.
* Helps clusters (as needed) to provide a needs-based, impartial response that analyses and takes into account the different needs of women, men, girls and boys, and the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of affected people (with respect to gender and age, for example).
* Supports efforts to ensure that protection, accountability to affected populations and early recovery inform all stages of the HPC and SRP.
* Informs the HC/HCT of operational progress and any issues that may require their input, advocacy or other support.
* Assists clusters to identify and develop advocacy issues and initiatives on strategic and operational questions; brings them to the attention of the HC/HCT.
* Supports the HC/HCT and clusters in facilitating cluster coordination monitoring, including: (i) cluster performance monitoring; and (ii) regular reviews by the HCT of the architecture of cluster coordination (see Section 11 Cluster Coordination Monitoring).
* Supports efforts to define common standards, tools and services (including service clusters), to create a conducive strategic and operational environment for clusters.
* Supports linkages between humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms, minimising duplication and maximising synergies.
* Provides inter-cluster information management tools and coordination as needed.
* Works with the HCT and clusters to facilitate pooled/common humanitarian funding.

# 8 Role of Clusters in Preparedness

Accountability for preparedness

National authorities have primary responsibility for preparedness. However, RCs (and HCs where they exist) have a responsibility to ensure that the humanitarian system is in a position to support national actors and equipped to respond to a crisis. The RC/HC will therefore call on Cluster Lead Agencies to operationalize emergency response preparedness (ERP) in their respective sectors and monitor its quality and comprehensiveness.

In preparing for and responding to an emergency, international humanitarian actors are expected to cooperate with national authorities and support national capacity wherever it is feasible and appropriate to do so.[[51]](#footnote-52)

What is preparedness?

Preparedness is a continuous process. Broadly defined, it includes any action, measure, or capacity development that is introduced before an emergency to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of a response and recovery. It builds the advance readiness of country teams, and strengthens their ability to respond during a crisis, when conditions deteriorate or new shocks occur. In practical terms, this requires country teams, supported by regional and global levels to:

* Identify key elements in the humanitarian programme cycle that require preparation in advance.
* Analyse and address anticipated risks to countries, populations and operations.
* Establish good working relationships with national authorities, accept their leadership where appropriate, and take fully into account their preparedness arrangements.
* Establish good working relationships with other partners whose cooperation will be critical in a response.
* Reinforce the coordination structures that will be used during a response.
* Clarify the roles and responsibilities of different members of the humanitarian community, including responsibilities vis-à-vis national authorities.

**The Emergency Response Preparedness Approach**

The IASC has adopted an approach called ‘Emergency Response Preparedness’ (ERP). ERP replaces the ‘Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance’ (2007). The purpose of ERP is to provide a systematic and coherent multi-hazard approach to emergency preparedness that enables humanitarian actors to hazards prepare themselves for rapid, effective and efficient action.

The ERP Approach has five components:[[52]](#footnote-53)

1. **Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Monitoring**

Hazards are identified and analysis ranks them as either Low, Medium or High level of risk based on potential impact and likelihood. This generates a country risk profile. Risk analysis is usually undertaken with national authorities and national capacity is included in an assessment of impact. This helps ensure that IASC preparedness efforts are relevant to programmes that assist national and local actors develop their own preparedness capacity. Indeed a common understanding of risk is the first step in the IASC/UNDG/UNISDR Common Framework on Preparedness.[[53]](#footnote-54)

Risk analysis leads HCTs to the development and review of Contingency Plans for seasonal hazards that pose risk at known times, or for static hazards like earthquakes that pose a risk at all times. Other hazards, such as conflict, that evolve more unpredictably are monitored and discussed as part of regular UNCT/HCT meetings, leading to decisions on when to develop Contingency Plans and implement advanced preparedness actions.

1. **Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA)**

MPAs are a set of activities that every HCT must implement in order to establish a minimum level of emergency preparedness at the country level. The MPAs are not risk or scenario-specific and usually do not require significant additional resources to accomplish. Rather, it requires management commitment and dedication of some staff time to ensure that those Minimum Preparedness Actions are not only planned, but also implemented. The MPAs are broken into the following categories:

1. Risk Monitoring
2. Coordination & Management Arrangements
3. Assessment/Information Management/Response Monitoring Arrangements
4. Operational Capacity and Arrangements to Deliver Relief and Protection
5. **Contingency Planning and Advanced Preparedness Actions**

Advanced Preparedness Actions (APAs) are designed to guide a HCT to an advanced level of readiness to respond to a specific risk. The APA checklist is a management tool that facilitates recording action status and responsible focal points in key categories of preparedness activities. Some APAs may require additional resources in the form of budgets, materials or personnel.

Unlike the MPAs, the APAs are risk-specific. The APAs should be implemented when risk anlaysis indicates a “moderate risk”, when risk monitoring indicates that a crisis is imminent or when there is a potential high impact hazard for which there is unlikely to be warning, such as an earthquake. They build on the MPAs already in place, and complement as well as implement actions identified in the Contingency Plan.

**A Contingency Plan (CP)** sets out the initial response strategy and operational plan that would be transformed into a Preliminary Response Plan to meet critical humanitarian needs during the first three to four weeks of an emergency, should a scenario materialise. The impetus to formulate a CP is the same as APAs - when risk analysis indicates a “moderate risk”, when risk monitoring indicates that a crisis is imminent or when there is a potential high impact hazard for which there is unlikely to be warning. Ideally, a CP should be developed for each of these risks, although resources are unlikely to be available at the country level to accomplish this. A practical compromise is to:

* Identify the risk that poses the greatest challenge in terms of number of beneficiaries, geographic spread, support requirements and access constraints;
* Elaborate the scenario related to this risk;
* Develop a plan to meet the resulting need;
* Examine the other risks to check to see whether the broad capability to meet the most challenging risk will cover these other risks
* If not, amend the existing CP in the areas which differ or – where this is not possible – develop a separate CP

CP should be updated and modified when more specific information (locations, likely humanitarian impact, etc.) becomes available. A CP should seamlessly transform into a Preliminary Response Plan (PRP) if the emergency occurs. The main elements of a Contingency Plan are:

1. Risk Analysis
2. Planning Assumptions
3. Objectives & Strategies
4. Coordination & Management Arrangements
5. Assessment/Information Management/Response Monitoring
6. Operational Delivery
	* Cluster Summary Plans (in the form of the SRP)
7. Preparedness gaps and actions to address them
8. Funding resources
	* Preparedness
	* Indicative Response

Where ERP actions are to be implemented, HCTs and Global Clusters (in line with their responsibilities set out below), should monitor the quality of (i) Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Monitoring (ii) MPAs and (iii) Contingency Planning and APAs, and assess whether these tasks have been completed, disseminated and understood by the relevant actors. The following scenarios outline who is responsible at country and global level for preparedness and applying the ERP approach, in three different contexts.

Preparedness Responsibilities

**Countries with a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).** Formally activated clusters will exist in these countries, though not in all contexts, and the presence of an HC indicates that they are at high risk. This operational environment and the presence of humanitarian actors with experience mean that emergency preparedness will normally be more integrated and developed. Under the HC’s leadership, clusters/sectors should be contributing to implementation of all five components of the ERP approach and engaging with national structures. MPAs should be particularly well understood and developed. Global Clusters should monitor the implementation of ERP actions at country level, and overall readiness, and support clusters/sectors as necessary.

**Countries with a Resident Coordinator, at high risk of emergencies and requiring international support.**[[54]](#footnote-55) In these countries, clusters may not have been activated formally, but sectoral coordination mechanisms (sectoral committees or roundtables, thematic or working groups) are likely to be active, in liaison with Government counterparts. Where sector partners have less experience of emergency preparedness or response, preparedness actions may be more challenging or take longer to implement. Governments may have developed preparedness, response and coordination arrangements in some sectors and therefore some sectors will be better prepared than others. Under the guidance of the RC and in close cooperation with Government, sector coordination mechanisms should help to operationalize relevant parts of the ERP Approach. Global Clusters should proactively support the RC and sector coordination mechanisms, encourage and support operationalization of the ERPs.

**Countries with a Resident Coordinator which are at low risk of emergencies requiring international support**. Clusters will not formally exist, and coordination mechanisms may not exist or may not be arranged in the same form as typical humanitarian response sectors. Government will have developed good preparedness, response and coordination arrangements in some sectors. The RC and sector lead agencies should promote coordination and preparedness actions in relevant sectors, using the risk profile, and assist Government and sectoral counterparts to plan how they will cooperate in the event of a crisis. In this context, sector lead agencies should prioritize the implementation of MPAs where gaps have been identified. Global Clusters are not expected to provide assistance unless specifically requested by the RC.

# 9 Minimum Commitments for Participation in Clusters

The case for commitment by cluster participants

Without the constant commitment of cluster participants, predictable coordination will not be achieved.

The minimum commitments for participation in country-level clusters set out what all local, national or international organizations undertake to contribute. They do not seek to exclude organizations or national authorities from participating in clusters.

CLAs have a reciprocal responsibility to ensure that they lead their clusters in a manner that goes beyond merely share information and coordinates effectively with their sub-national counterparts.[[55]](#footnote-56) The responsibility of CLAs, and Cluster Coordinators, is to provide a forum for humanitarian action that meets affected people’s needs and supports other levels of the strategic response (for example, inter-cluster coordination at country and global levels).

Agreeing to the commitments

All cluster partners (including CLAs in their role as implementer alongside other agencies) have a shared mutual responsibility to meet the humanitarian needs of affected people in a timely manner.

The minimum commitments are not prescriptive and should be adapted to actual needs and context, since cluster-based responses vary greatly in scale and complexity. They are a starting point and should be considered as an absolute minimum. Country-level clusters should base themselves on this document when they develop or update their ToRs and commitments.

Minimum commitments

The minimum commitments for participation in clusters include:

1. Commitment to humanitarian principles, the *Principles of Partnership,*[[56]](#footnote-57)cluster-specific guidance and internationally recognized programme standards, including the Secretary-General’s *Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*.
2. Commitment to mainstream protection in programme delivery (including respect for principles of non-discrimination, do no harm, etc.).
3. Readiness to participate in actions that specifically improve accountability to affected people, in line with the IASC *Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations*[[57]](#footnote-58)and the related *Operational Framework*.
4. A demonstrated understanding of the duties and responsibilities associated with membership of the cluster, as defined by IASC ToRs and guidance notes,[[58]](#footnote-59) any cluster-specific guidance, and country cluster ToRs, where available.
5. Active participation in the cluster and a commitment to consistently engage in the cluster’s collective work.
6. Capacity and willingness to contribute to the cluster’s strategic response plan and activities, which must include inter-cluster coordination.
7. Commitment to mainstream key programmatic cross-cutting issues (including age, gender, environment and HIV/AIDs).
8. Commitment by a relevant senior staff member to work consistently with the cluster to fulfil its mission.
9. Commitment to work cooperatively with other cluster partners to ensure an optimal and strategic use of available resources, and share information on organizational resources.
10. Willingness to take on leadership responsibilities in sub-national or working groups as needed, subject to capacity and mandate.
11. Undertake advocacy, and disseminate advocacy messages to affected communities, the host Government, donors, the HCT, CLAs, the media and other audiences.
12. Ensure that the cluster provides interpretation (in an appropriate language) so that all cluster partners are able to participate, including local organizations (and national and local authorities where appropriate).

#  10 Sharing Leadership

Evaluations and research have found that, when clusters share leadership between UN agencies, NGOs, IOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement[[59]](#footnote-60), partnerships, advocacy and information transfer tend to improve. Sharing leadership produces stronger engagement and better coordination. NGOs are often well established in remote field locations where the UN has limited or no presence. They can offer technical expertise, different approaches to accountability to affected people, long-term involvement in and knowledge of the community, and leadership potential.

Sharing leadership

Shared forms of leadership distribute global, national or sub-national responsibilities for CLA or cluster coordination to two or more agencies. They set out clear roles, define accountabilities and promote mutual understanding. The appropriate and transparent sharing of leadership among different actors is a true reflection of the interdependency of the humanitarian community to deliver an effective strategic response.

In all contexts, leadership require those involved actors to go beyond minimum norms of participation and implementation and to define together clear and well-understood leadership roles and responsibilities. When developing ToRs, it is vital at every level to examine and break down the leadership role that is to be shared, and its accompanying responsibilities. ToRs should address the complementary roles of CLAs, Cluster Coordinators and cluster participants, and make clear to all parties how accountability, strategy, representation, advocacy, fundraising, and other key issues will be managed.[[60]](#footnote-61)

Examples of shared leadership

The Global Logistics Cluster seconds NGO staff with specialized skills to the global cluster support cell from where they can be deployed to serve as Cluster Coordinators. This model: provides training; ensures a consistent approach to each Logistics Cluster deployment; makes sure that information management and reporting are handled consistently; applies lessons learned uniformly; and involves seconded staff in preparedness missions. It also allows NGOs, which might not be in a position to take on Provider of Last Resort responsibilities, to operate with authority at field level, on behalf of the Logistics Cluster, supported by WFP.

In other cases, leadership responsibilities have been shared sequentially; one CLA hands over to another in a planned manner. The Emergency Shelter Cluster has adopted "phased leadership" for natural disasters since 2006; on this model, different agencies lead the cluster during different phases of the response. (For example, an agency such as IFRC, which has expertise in emergencies and surge capacity, leads during the emergency and transitional phases, while agencies such as UN-Habitat, which have development expertise, take over during the recovery phase.) Other learning can be found within the CCCM cluster.

The Education Cluster is co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children at Global level with a jointly staffed secretariat based in Geneva as well as a jointly resourced rapid response team.  The co-leadership arrangement has been formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding and oversight of the Global Cluster is undertaken by a steering group with representation from both organisations.  At country level the vast majority of Education Clusters are co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children[[61]](#footnote-62), with the co-leadership arrangement seen as a key strength of the cluster as it underpins the collaborative nature of the cluster approach.

Parameters of shared leadership

When considering sharing the leadership of a cluster, the following points should be taken into account:

1. ToRs or memorandums of understanding must be developed, to ensure the parties have a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. Examples of different ToRs are available online.[[62]](#footnote-63) Those involved should jointly determine which shared leadership model works best for the context they are in. The ToR must be completed and understood in advance, because organizations that take on a shared leadership role will usually need to recruit full-time staff.
2. Sharing leadership can strengthen cluster leadership but does not displace the core responsibilities and accountability of the designated in-country CLA, including its role as Provider of Last Resort.[[63]](#footnote-64)
3. Terms used to describe sharing leadership vary. Co-facilitator, co-coordinator, co-steward, co-lead, sub-cluster coordination, sub-national leadership, work group membership, task force chairs and secondment are all used in different contexts. Within the complex and diverse environment of a response, harmonization of language should be sought; Global Cluster Lead Agencies and HCTs are encouraged to provide guidance when shared leadership ToRs are being developed at country level.

For further consideration

1. Though difficulties arise in some cases, it is a goal of every response that national Government should fulfil its responsibilities to its people. Those in shared leadership roles should help to build national capacity.
2. Effective shared leadership has transactional costs, in workload and financially. Resource partners, the RC/HC and the HCT should ensure that funding is not an obstacle for agencies that wish to share cluster leadership. When possible (and where financial mechanisms under its authority, the RC/HC and HCT should help to mobilize funds to support shared leadership in a transparent manner; in other cases, and in other countries, donor support should be encouraged.[[64]](#footnote-65)
3. Sharing will not compensate for poor core leadership. It is often assumed that shared leadership will improve leadership by increasing capacity. It is incumbent on the CLA and its partners to ensure that enough qualified staff are put in leadership positions.
4. All relevant actors should have opportunities to train in areas of competency that are essential to successful management of a shared leadership structure.
5. Not all actors are willing or able to share leadership responsibilities. As with cluster activation, decisions to share leadership should be based on an assessment of needs and capacities on the ground.

# 11 Monitoring Cluster Coordination

**What is Monitoring cluster coordination?**

Cluster coordination aims to strengthen the organization of the international humanitarian community and make it more accountable to affected people. Recognizing that weak leadership and poor coordination critically undermine the quality of a humanitarian response, the Transformative Agenda stated that cluster coordination should be monitored at country level to strengthen coordination, performance, and participation.

This section discusses monitoring of cluster coordination; the same mechanisms apply to emergency sector coordination.[[65]](#footnote-66)

Monitoring cluster coordination refers to two different processes

1. **Cluster Coordination Performance** **Monitoring** **(CCPM)** is a self-assessment of cluster performance in terms of the six core cluster functions and accountability to affected people.
2. **A Cluster Coordination Architecture Review** examines the continued appropriateness and relevance of cluster coordination structures.

**Why monitor cluster coordination?**

Monitoring cluster coordination at national and sub-national level in sudden onset and protracted crises is necessary to ensure that clusters are: efficient and effective coordination mechanisms; fulfil the core cluster functions; support efficient delivery of relevant services; meet the needs of cluster members; and demonstrate accountability to affected people. Clusters are time bound and, wherever possible, should transition to emergency or recovery coordination structures that are led or supported nationally. Monitoring also ensures that the architecture of coordination responds to changes in the context and in coordination needs.

It is important to demonstrate the value that coordination structures brings, both for accountability and to justify the costs involved.

**1. Cluster performance monitoring**

**Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring** (CCPM) is a self-assessment exercise. Clusters assess their performance against the six core cluster functions (see Section 4) and accountability to affected populations. It is a country-led process, supported globally. Ideally, it is carried out by all clusters/sectors at the same time but can be implemented on demand by individual clusters. A CCPM enables all cluster partners and coordinators to identify strengths and weaknesses of performance and paths to improvement.

Complementary to humanitarian response monitoring[[66]](#footnote-67), which measures aid delivered in terms of progress towards the objectives of the SRP, CCPM reviews cluster functions to see whether they are being implemented adequately to support the delivery of the shared strategic response plan. It combines an objective description of how the cluster is organised and what its deliverables are, with feedback through a survey from all partners on how they are involved, contribute and make use of these functions and their deliverables.

A CCPM should ideally be implemented **three to six months after the onset of an emergency** and **annually thereafter**. In protracted crises, the recommendation is to complete a CCPM annually. Detailed guidance is available on each step of a CCPM.[[67]](#footnote-68)

A CCPM process involves **four steps and outputs**:

**Step 1 - Planning**

* The HCT meets to discuss the purpose and agree on implementation of a CCPM process. It proposes a timeframe for implementation.
* The Inter-cluster Coordination Group meets to discuss the CCPM process and its objectives. It decides whether only national or also sub-national levels will be involved, agrees the timeline, and allocates roles and responsibilities for the process.
* Individual clusters meet with partners to discuss the objectives, and clarify the different steps and processes involved[[68]](#footnote-69).

**Step 2 - CCPM Survey**

* The cluster coordinator completes a cluster description survey (online[[69]](#footnote-70)).
* The cluster coordinator and cluster partners each complete separate (online) feedback questionnaires (20-30 minutes).
* Global Clusters[[70]](#footnote-71) use an automated system[[71]](#footnote-72) to compile survey data and produce a Cluster Description Report with information on the cluster’ structures and on the availability of key outputs linked to the cluster functions, and a Preliminary Cluster Coordination Performance Report which includes a colour coded analysis of the six core functions and on accountability to affected population. (illustrated below). This preliminary performance analysis is a snap shot, and primarily serves to focus the discussion with partners to agree on an action plan for strengthening the cluster’s performance.

**Extract of a Cluster Coordination Preliminary Performance Response**



**Step 3 – Cluster Analysis and Action Planning**

* In a half or full day workshop, each cluster discusses the cluster description and the survey results (and any related questions), identifies mitigating factors and explanations of performance and agrees specific corrective actions that will be taken, including request for support as indicated. The Performance Report and an Action Plan are then finalized with the additional information and shared with stakeholders.

**Step 4 - Follow-up and Monitoring**

* The Inter-Cluster Coordination Group reviews the final Cluster Coordination Performance Reports and Action Plans and identifies common weaknesses across clusters that need to be addressed systematically.
* The Coordination Performance Reports and Action Plans are presented to the HCT to agree which actions require their support and to Global Clusters to identify individual cluster support requirements.
* Each cluster monitors implementation of its Action Plan at regular intervals.
* Clusters report every quarter to the HCT on progress and challenges.

The timeframe of a CCPM exercise is determined by the HC/HCT and agreed by clusters. It can be short; however, in more protracted situations at least one month is recommended. This provides sufficient time to plan, issue and allow partners to complete the cluster description, the questionnaire, compile the Preliminary Cluster Coordination Performance Report, hold cluster discussions, and develop and present an agreed Action Plan.

**2. Cluster coordination architecture review**

The TA states that cluster-coordination architecture should be reviewed regularly to ensure that cluster coordination structures remain ‘fit for purpose’. In **new emergencies**, cluster coordination architecture should be reviewed **immediately[[72]](#footnote-73)** and then within **three months**, as in L3 emergencies.[[73]](#footnote-74) In **protracted crises**, it should be reviewed immediately and then **annually**.[[74]](#footnote-75)

A cluster coordination architecture review is initiated and led by the HC/HCT, supported by OCHA. It assesses whether cluster coordination structures continue to be appropriate in light of changes in the humanitarian context and determines whether they should (i) continue as they are, (ii) be expanded, (iii) be streamlined, or (iv) transition with a plan and benchmarks for deactivation. Section 3 describes transition and de-activation and the implementation of cluster coordination architecture reviews.

Cluster coordination architecture reviews may be informed by CCPM results, but decisions on whether a cluster remains ‘fit for purpose’ must be based on an analysis of changes in humanitarian context and national coordination capacity. OCHA assists RC/HCs to ensure that reviews at country level are carried out in a timely manner, and monitors the implementation of reviews globally.

# Annex 1. HPC-Related Inter-Cluster Products & Outputs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| HPC Component | Related Product/Outputs | Examples of Inter-Cluster Elements of Outputs |
| Preparedness | * Prepare Contingency Plans.
* Implement Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA).
* Contribute to development of SoPs for preparedness emergency response actions.
 | * Analyse scenarios, and assess the multi-sectoral nature of the potential response.
* Establish coordination structures; complete a joint needs assessment.
* Agree the coordination structures in a crisis.
 |
| Needsassessment | * Contribute to the Situation Analysis
* Contribute to Humanitarian Needs Overview.
* Contribute to the Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA).
 | * Jointly analyse information on the situation and initial assistance and protection needs.
* Develop a joint rapid assessment approach.
 |
| Strategic planning | * Contribute to the SRP.
* Contribute to SRP indicators.
* Identify inter-sectoral synergies to meet strategic response objectives.
* Propose prioritization of response activities.
* Ensure that protection analysis contributes to SRP development and is mainstreamed across clusters.
* Clarify responsibilities on issues shared between clusters.
* Define the inter-sectoral needs that service clusters will provide.
* Prepare integrated early recovery strategies.
 | * Jointly analyse needs.
* Jointly analyse multi-sectoral dimensions of the response.
* Agree multi-sectoral indicators.
* Agree cash transfer solutions.
* Jointly conduct inter-sectoral analysis, so that response activities can be prioritized.
* Agree on how protection analysis can contribute to the development of strategic objectives. Agree on how protection mainstreaming is undertaken by different clusters.
* Agree which sectors will plan activities that can be covered by different clusters (waste, healthcare, cash grants…).
* Agree on critical shared services, such as logistics.
* Adopt common approaches on shared early recovery actions, such as cash-based emergency employment.
 |
| Resource Mobilization | * Flash/Consolidated Appeal.
* Pooled/Common Humanitarian Fund applications.
 | * Agree proposals for timeline and funding priorities.
* Agree process and prioritization.
 |
| Implementation | * Coordinate field activities between clusters (to ensure sequencing is appropriate or that events are shared to maximize impact).
* Design and agree multi-sectoral, multi-agency, accountability mechanisms with affected people.
* Identify humanitarian access issues and their impact.
 | * Link the timing of activities (vaccinations, nutrition assessments...).
* Adopt common approaches to cash transfer programmes (value of cash grants...).
* Agree a multi-sectoral approach to engagement with communities.
* Jointly analyse impacts.
* Agree a joint advocacy strategy on access.
 |
| Monitoring  | * Establish and implement joint mechanisms of accountability to affected people.
* Monitor achievement of strategic objectives.
 | * Agree an inter-cluster framework for community feedback.
* Jointly analyse multi-sectoral objectives.
* Jointly analyse markets for cash transfers.
 |
| Operational Peer Review/ Evaluation | * Contribute to operational peer reviews and evaluations.
* Contribute to reviews of cluster coordination architecture with the aim of transiting to nationally led coordination structures.
 | * Share results and actions between clusters to identify common challenges and solutions.
* Agree an approach to reviewing the appropriateness of coordination structures.
* Agree an approach to engagement with national structures.
 |

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

**AAP** Accountability to affected people

**AOR** Areas of responsibility

**CAP** Consolidated Appeals Process

**CERF** Central Emergency Response Fund

**CLA** Cluster lead agency

**CPM** Cluster performance monitoring

**CRP** Contingency response planning

**ECHA** Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs

**ERC**  Emergency Relief Coordinator

EW Early Warning

**HC** Humanitarian Coordinator

**HCT**  Humanitarian Country Team

**HPC** Humanitarian programme cycle

**IARRM**  Inter-Agency rapid response mechanism

**IASC** Inter-Agency Standing Committee

**ICCT** Inter Cluster Coordination Teams

**IFRC** International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**IM** Information management

**IOM** International Organization for Migration

**TA** IASC Transformative Agenda

**MPA** Minimum preparedness action

**MHPSS** Mental health and psychosocial support

**MIRA** Multi Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment

**OCHA**  Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**POLR** Provider of last resort

**RC** Resident Coordinator

**SC** Steering committee

**SAG** Strategic advisory group

**SOP** Standard operating procedure

**SRP** Strategic Response Plan

**SWG** Sub Working Group

**TA** Transformative Agenda

**TOR** Terms of reference

**TWiG/TWG** Technical working group

**UNCT** UN Country Team

**UNDAC** United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team

**UNDG** United Nations Development Group

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

**UNDOCO** UN Development Operations Coordination Office

**UN-Habitat** United Nations Human Settlements Programme

# Further References (*electronic links*)

* [Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, November 2006](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/iasc-guidance-note-using-cluster-approach-strengthen-humanitarian-response).
* [Framework on Cluster Coordination Costs at the Country Level, May 2011](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/framework-cluster-coordination-costs-and-functions-country-level).
* [IASC, Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads and OCHA in Information Management](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/iasc-operational-guidance-responsibilities-sector-cluster-leads-and-ocha-information).
* [Cluster Lead Agencies Joint Letter on Dual Responsibility, November 2009](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/cluster-lead-agencies-joint-letter-dual-responsibility).
* [IASC Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Leads at Country Level](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/iasc-generic-tor-cluster-leads-country-level).
* [IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action 2006](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/documents/subsidi/tf_gender/IASC%20Gender%20Handbook%20%28Feb%202007%29.pdf).
* [IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings 2005](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-tf_gender-gbv)
* [IASC. Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/handbook-rcs-and-hcs-emergency-preparedness-and-response).
* [Shelter Cluster Evaluations](https://www.sheltercluster.org/AboutUs/Pages/Cluster-Evaluations.aspx).
* [WASH Cluster Coordination Handbook, January 2009](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/document/wash-cluster-coordinator-handbook).
* [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/news_and_publications/IDP_Handbook_EN.pdf).
* [The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Handbook Minimum Inter-Agency Standards for Protection Mainstreaming, World Vision 2012](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/WV_Interagency_Minimum_Standards_2012_EN.pdf)
* [The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, Statement by the IASC Principals, 17 December 2013](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/IASC%20Guidance%20and%20Tools/IASC_Principals_Statement_Centrality_Protection_Humanitarian_Action_December2013_EN.pdf)
1. UNHCR is mandated to lead and coordinate international responses to refugee needs. Clusters are not established in that context. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. At: [http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Exceptionally, the global protection cluster includes subsidiary coordination bodies called Areas of Responsibility (AoRs), which may be replicated at field level as required (as sub-clusters). These sub-clusters have designated lead agencies which have equivalent responsibilities to cluster lead agencies in their area of responsibility. Thus, much of the guidance in this reference module also applies to AoRs present in the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. At: [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87](file:///D%3A%5Cwww.humanitarianinfo.org%5Ciasc%5Cpageloader.aspx%3Fpage%3Dcontent-template-default%26bd%3D87). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Both documents can be found at; <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-common-default&sb=89>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See IASC, *Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities*, July 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For Accountability to Affected Populations, see: [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page =content-subsidi-common-default&sb=89](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page%20=content-subsidi-common-default&sb=89). For humanitarian principles, see: [https://ochanet.unocha.org/p/ Documents/OOM\_HumPrinciple\_English. Pdf; https:// ochanet.unocha.org/ p/Documents/ OOM\_HumPrinciple \_English.pdf](https://ochanet.unocha.org/p/%20Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_English.%20Pdf%3B%20%20https%3A//%20ochanet.unocha.org/%20p/Documents/%20OOM_HumPrinciple%20_English.pdf); and: [http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/ files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/%20files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Clusters should be activated in accordance with the procedures described in Section 2 on Cluster Activation. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Mechanisms are “overwhelmed” when current structures can no longer manage due to the scale of need, number of actors involved, adoption of a more complex multi-sectoral approach is necessary. A Government is ‘constrained’ when it is unable or unwilling to act (for example, because it is itself party to a conflict). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See Section 2 on Cluster Activation. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. See: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/582/70/IMG/NR058270.pdf?OpenElement>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. At: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-common-default&sb=14>. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Depending on context, this decision may be made by the UNCT or an expanded UNCT. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Within 3 weeks for L3 emergencies: see Protocol 2, Humanitarian System-wide Activation. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. For example limited or lack of willingness or where duty bearers are party to the conflict. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_English.pdf> and: [http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/ files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/%20files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities. At: https://clusters. humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/IASC%20Guidance%20on%20Working%20with%20National%20Authorities\_July2011.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. UNHCR is the Cluster Lead Agency of the Global Protection Cluster. However, at the country level in disaster situations or in complex emergencies without significant displacement, the three protection mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) will consult closely and, under the overall leadership of the HC/RC, agree which agency among the three will assume the role of Cluster Lead Agency for protection. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. See Section 6 on the Role of Clusters in Preparedness. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. In the case of service clusters (Logistics, Emergency Telecommunications), the CLA at country and global level also normally coincide, because service clusters require technical expertise that other agencies cannot be presumed to possess. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. At: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87>. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. De-activation can transfer leadership and accountabilities to other internationally supported mechanisms. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. For frequency of reviews, see this section: When does review of cluster coordination architecture take place? [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. See Section 2 for Criteria for Cluster Activation. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. See IASC, *Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on working with National Authorities*, July 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. For information on funding for transition, see IASC Task Team, *Humanitarian Financing*. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. In line with accountabilities agreed in cluster approach guidance and in CLA ToRs. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. This will be clearest when clusters have obvious Government counterparts (as in education and health). Other clusters may need to work with a range of Government or civil society mechanisms. Service clusters may have no natural counterparts, but may work with Government or other coordination structures to hand over service provision or strengthen preparedness [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. See also IASC Principals, *Transformative Agenda Compendium of Agreed Actions*, No. 33, December 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Protocol 2, Humanitarian System-wide Emergency Activation. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. IASC Principals, *Transformative Agenda Compendium of Agreed Actions*, No. 33, December 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Annual reviews are also mentioned in Section 11 of *Cluster Coordination Monitoring*. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Examples of summary notes to the ERC can be found at: [http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info](http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Recommendation 26, IASC, *Transformative Agenda: Chapeau and Compendium of Actions*, January 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. IASC, *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*, November 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. The Strategic Response Plan (SRP) Guidance notes,,“…the HC/HCT should ensure the strategy is based on a through and consultative protection analysis”. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. At: [https://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/IASC%20Guidance%20for% 20Humanitarian%20Country%20Teams%2C%20Nov%2009.pdf](https://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/IASC%20Guidance%20for%25%2020Humanitarian%20Country%20Teams%2C%20Nov%2009.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Reflecting the ToRs of CLAs. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. See Section 8 on general commitments for participation in clusters. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Final Summary and Action Points, IASC Principals meeting, 13 December 2011, recommendation 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Depending on the context, RC/RC representatives may prefer to be invitees. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. OCHA normally supports inter-cluster coordination at all levels; it is the responsibility of the HC and HCT to determine its most appropriate form and function. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. In such cases, regional clusters assume the responsibilities of national clusters. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. For the purposes of this section, clusters and sectors are equally relevant but the term inter-cluster coordination will be used throughout. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. The strategic objective itself and the humanitarian context will determine which sectors are needed for its achievement. Some strategic objectives may require contributions from all clusters and others a more limited group and should be determined through inter-cluster discussions with all clusters. Smaller groups of clusters, potentially supported by members of the HCT, may come together to discuss specific strategies for and periodically for monitoring of their achievement, although all clusters and the HCT need to be aware of progress and challenges to ensure the appropriate overall linkages as necessary [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. The modalities for inter cluster coordination should be flexible. In the case of the protection cluster, the AoRs (or ‘sub-clusters’) may need to liaise directly with other clusters and to engage directly in inter-cluster fora alongside the protection cluster, and arrangements for doing so should be agreed at country level In consultation with the protection cluster lead agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. ‘Cash transfer programming’ refers to cash and voucher-based forms of humanitarian assistance. From an inter-cluster perspective, strategic discussion and decision making on the appropriateness of cash and voucher transfers may take place at all three levels [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. For more on inter-cluster matrices for WASH and CCCM, Shelter, Health, Nutrition, Early Recovery, and Education, see: [www.washcluster.info/drupal/?q=technical-library/intercluster-coordination](file:///D%3A%5Cusers%5CMCCLUSKEYJ%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5Cnotes6E1B91%5Cwww.washcluster.info%5Cdrupal%5C%3Fq%3Dtechnical-library%5Cintercluster-coordination). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Protection Cluster mainstreaming trainings are being produced in collaboration with field protection and global clusters and technical support in form of check-lists and work-plans have also been provided for specific clusters such as CCCM, Wash, Shelter, Health and Food Security clusters. For further reference see: http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. In support of cash transfer programming, decision making, and monitoring. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. See *Transformative Agenda Protocol: Common Framework for Preparedness*. At: http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. A full explanation of ERP, as well as guidance and templates, can be found at: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/emergency-response-preparedness](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/emergency-response-preparedness). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. See <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/downloadDoc.aspx?docID=6676> The Common Framework on Preparedness seeks to use capability acquired for humanitarian action in a coherent manner to assist development of national and local preparedness. A key element is formulation of nationally owned plans for this capacity development. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. The IASC Emergency Directors Group determine ‘high risk’ on the basis of the bi-annual IASC *Early Warning Early Action Report*, the yearly *Global Focus Model*, or the new *Index for Risk Management* (InfoRM). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Use of the terms ‘Cluster Coordinator’, ‘Cluster Lead Agency’ and ‘Humanitarian Country Team’ follows the IASC Guidance Note on *Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response,* November 2006; the Joint Letter from Cluster Lead Agencies to their Directors/Representatives at Country Level, October 2009; and IASC, *Guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams*, November 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. These include the values of equality, transparency, a results-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity. See: [www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org](http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. These list leadership and governance; transparency; feedback and complaints; participation; and design, monitoring and evaluation. See Revised Action Points, IASC Principals meeting, 13 December 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. These include, but are not limited to, the *Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster at the Country Level*, and IASC guidance on particular cross-cutting issues and information management. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Subject to the mandates of the three different components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Refer to the good practice catalogue on the IASC website. In South Sudan, for example, a generic ToR for NGO cluster co-coordinators is being developed. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Occasionally (based on available capacity) the cluster is led by only one organisation/agency, also in one or two cases another NGO has taken on the co-leadership role. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Several clusters, including CCCM and Education, can provide useful sources. See: http://clusters .humanitarianresponse.info. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. The 2008 definition of Provider of Last Resort (POLR) was revised by the IASC Principals in December 2011 and now reads: “Where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, the cluster lead, as POLR, must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil critical gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-led HCT Strategic Response Plan” (revision underlined). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. *The Framework on Cluster Coordination Costs and Functions in Humanitarian Emergencies at Country Level* (May 2011) highlights the value of giving NGOs leadership roles in coordination, and states that "donors will also explore mechanisms to fund NGOs directly for coordination roles”. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Note: this section discusses monitoring of cluster coordination, not monitoring of activities that clusters deliver. For information on monitoring of humanitarian programmes and activities, see Humanitarian Response Monitoring Guidance note at <http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/home/table> [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Humanitarian response monitoring, as defined by the *Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module*, is a continuous process that records the aid delivered to an affected population as well as the results achieved. It tracks inputs to and outputs from interventions to affected populations, charts the outcomes of cluster activities, and measures progress towards the objectives of the SRP, while considering the affected population’s perspective on timeliness of assistance, access to services, and their use. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. At: <http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. A template presentation is available to facilitate this meeting http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. The online tool has been stressed as perhaps the most efficient means of completing the survey, but other ways are acceptable if clusters/coordinators wish to include additional questions and/or use an alternative tool. As long as the agreed-to reporting format is followed any survey approach is acceptable. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Or OCHA HQ if a global cluster has yet to integrated the survey system [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. If alternative approaches are adopted, cluster in country are expected to compile the survey results. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. To ensure pre-crisis cluster coordination architecture remains appropriate in the new context [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. This period aligns the review of coordination structures with the review of an L3 declaration (and empowered leadership), which also takes place at three months. See Protocol 2, *Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Activation* (April 2012), and Protocol 1, *Empowered Leadership* (April 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Recommendation 33, IASC, *Transformative Agenda: Chapeau and Compendium of Actions* (January 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)