investing in smarter humanitarian coordination …

cluster*wise*

everything
you wanted
to know
about
cluster coordination
but were
afraid to ask

How to …

♦ include all humanitarian stakeholders
♦ deal with donors
♦ manage the coordination process
♦ manage large meetings
♦ add value
♦ manage information
♦ apply best technical practice
… and all those other things that lead to improved humanitarian action

Edited

by

James Shepherd-Barron

clustercoordination●org

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The editor wishes to thank the various humanitarian experts, all of whom are members of 'clustercoordination.org' who contributed to the writing of this handbook, who provided invaluable technical advice based on their current experiences of applying the cluster approach in the field.

This booklet was edited by James Shepherd-Barron, founder of 'clustercoordination.org', as a practical guide for those involved with Clusters in the field.

It consists of a series of action-oriented tips for Cluster Coordinators and members of Clusters to consider before, during, and after the activation of the Cluster Approach.

It complements 'official' tools and guidelines coming out of the formal IASC process, which can be found on the UN's official 'www.oneresponse.info' web platform.

More detail on how to actually do the tasks outlined in brief here, complete with templates, 'best practice' examples, and case studies can be found at

<p align="center">www.clustercoordination.org</p>

This is an informal website established by a network of Cluster Coordinators and Information Managers with extensive experience of actually applying the Cluster Approach in the field.

This is a working draft. Comments from anyone at any time are welcome, even encouraged as we can all learn from your experience. Please send such feedback to the editor,

<p align="center">james@clustercoordination.org</p>

CONTENTS

WHAT IS CLUSTER COORDINATION ?

Coordination is a service function that creates an enabling environment for organizations working in and across sectoral areas of work. It does this through facilitation of a consensus management process on behalf of all stakeholders.

The purpose of coordination is to save lives and reduce suffering more efficiently and more effectively by timely allocation of appropriate resources to the most vulnerable.

Incoherent and un-cooperative planning by actors engaged in humanitarian response minimises the benefits and maximises the potential pitfalls of that response. Similarly, weak coordination diminishes the potential of those affected by disaster to achieve their rights to protection and assistance.

Managing the coordination of humanitarian action is the proactive process of realising allocative efficiencies in operational environments of scarcity, uncertainty, infrastructural collapse, market failure, competition, and often danger. It does this through:

- independently identifying and analysing needs
- identifying and filling gaps in aid delivery
- avoiding duplication of effort
- minimising fragmentation of resources, and
- increasing availability of overall resources as a result

> **Coordination is also a way of:**
> - Dividing activities thematically and geographically among actors
> - Managing inter-dependencies between different sectoral activities
> - Recognizing complementary capacities and competencies
> - Valuing comparative advantage

Principles of Cluster coordination require that:

- an enabling environment for robust decision-making, where the voice of the smallest can be heard, is created
- all Cluster partners, including the Cluster Lead Agency, are equal and have equal voice
- a process that moves from information sharing through cooperation to collaboration is facilitated
- complementarity of different agencies' comparative advantages and capacities are recognised
- Cluster Lead Agencies are accountable to the beneficiaries they serve, to their peers, to their donors, to their Boards, and to the Humanitarian Coordinator
- relevant information is shared in a timely manner through Cluster mechanisms

- individual agencies cooperate in adjusting programmes to reflect strategic priorities agreed by the Cluster and the actions of others
- bridges to transition and early recovery are built early
- particular needs of the most vulnerable are prioritized
- suitable separation from military and political operations is maintained

WHAT IS THE CLUSTER APPROACH ?

In humanitarian circles, the dreadful word 'cluster' is now synonymous with 'humanitarian reform' and has come to embody notions of predictability, responsibility, accountability and partnership in all areas of humanitarian action.

While the word 'cluster' itself means no more than a group of organizations coalescing around a common area of work, it is actually the word 'approach' that drives the idea of improved humanitarian action forward as it implies working together in a spirit of inclusivity and partnership where all stakeholders are transparently and mutually accountable for what they do.

The basic premise is that what humanitarians were doing back in 2004 was not working very well, and that business could not carry on as usual. The far-reaching implications of this requirement for 'change' remain the case today, and, put more formally, are about:

♦ achieving more strategic responses
♦ improving effectiveness of humanitarian action
♦ allocating resources more efficiently
♦ knowing what to expect from each stakeholder, especially designated Cluster Lead Agencies
♦ holding those responsible for humanitarian action to account
♦ providing predictability in terms of who is responsible for what
♦ improving transparency
♦ to the extent possible, making sure that all needs are met (provider of last resort).

CLUSTERS WERE ESTABLISHED TO ADDRESS …
♦ Long-standing gaps
♦ Erratic coordination
♦ Insufficient accountability
♦ Inconsistent donor policies
♦ Proliferation of actors
♦ Government demands
♦ Changing role of UN
♦ Poor predictability
♦ Lack of transparency

The legitimacy of the approach is derived through its breadth of participation.

WHAT DO CLUSTER COORDINATORS DO ?

- **MANAGE THE COORDINATION PROCESS**
    - Set up and chair the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)
    - Develop and facilitate adherence to the cluster's Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)
    - Establish TORs and allocate focal points for Technical Working Groups (TWIG)
    - Facilitate proactive engagement by Cluster partners in joint assessment of need
    - Ensure relevance and validity of contextual, situational, gap, and capacity analysis
    - Ensure information is properly used for planning and monitoring
    - Manage effective meetings
    - Ensure inter-cluster and cross-cutting issues are addressed
    - Develop the Cluster workplan (if not already in the SOF)

- **MANAGE INFORMATION CONTENT AND FLOW**
    - Web site content & functionality
    - Data management (integrated and sector-specific Matrices)
    - Graphics (coverage and trends)
    - Maps (with multiple overlays)
    - Contact list management (e.g Googlegroups)
    - 'How to Contact Us' poster

- **REPORT**
    - Situation Reports
    - Bulletins

- **ASSESS & MONITOR NEEDS**
    - Rapid Needs Assessment
    - Comprehensive Village Integrated Assessment (+ MIRA)
    - Survey (30 cluster random sample survey)

- **ADVOCATE**
    - Represent the cluster to Government and the Humanitarian Coordinator
    - Ensure proper crafting of the message

- **FACILITATE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT, which integrates**
    - Disaster Risk Reduction
    - Early Recovery
    - Relief, Rehabilitation and Development linkages
    - Logical Framework Analysis
    - Strategic Operational Framework formulation
    - Results-based planning

- **ANALYSE**
    - Risk, Hazard, and Vulnerability
    - Who, What, Where, When (4W)
    - Partner capacities
    - Financial and Programmatic gaps and duplications
    - Regional comparisons

- **PROVIDE TERMS OF REFERENCE**
    - Cluster
    - Cluster Partners (including 'Good Humanitarian Donorship')
    - All Coordination Team members
    - SAG & TWIG

- **ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CAPITAL & SUB-NATIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES**

- **ENSURE CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION & COOPERATION**

- **BUILD CAPACITY**
    - Transfer skills, budgets, and assets
    - Link lessons learned to contingency planning

- **MOBILIZE RESOURCES**
    - Financial (Flash Appeal & Revision, CERF, common funding criteria, CAP, Pooled Funds)
    - Human (Deputy, Information Management Team, Technical Adviser, Hub Teams)
    - Immediate material needs (short procurement practices)

PRIORITY TASKS
- Manage coordination at national and sub-national level
- Assess Needs
- Avoid gaps and duplications
- Develop a Cluster Strategy and Workplan
- Manage information content and flow
- Apply appropriate technical standards
- Monitor performance
- Build capacity
- Mobilize resources
- Report

- **MANAGE MEETINGS**
  - Large Meetings
  - Agenda-setting & prioritization
  - Meeting Notes (translated)
  - Simultaneous translation
  - Before-During-After actions correctly identified and responsibilities for follow-up allocated
- **OVERSIGHT OVERALL CLUSTER PERFORMANCE**
  - Real-Time Evaluations
  - Cluster Performance
- **ADMINISTER AN OFFICE START-UP**
  - Hiring & Firing
  - Book-keeping
  - Material supplies
  - Fleet Management
  - Translation and Interpreting

MEMBERS OF A CLUSTER COORDINATION TEAM INCLUDE …

The ideal is that the Cluster Coordinator acts as an 'honest broker' independent of their parent agency affiliation (see section on 'Role'). For large scale disasters, this is financially justifiable and operationally doable because of the scale of response required. Large-scale disasters also require more than one person to manage a Cluster effectively – in fact, as the list below appears to suggest, sometimes *many* more.

Nor should roles be confused with resources required to fulfill them: The information management section of the Emergency Shelter Cluster in Islamabad for the Pakistan earthquake response in 2005, consisted of no less than sixteen people at one point. Far from being an expensive overhead, this level of resourcing was deemed cost-effective and commensurate with evolving requirements at the time. After all, of the sixteen, only one was an international 'information manager' while the others were national data entry clerks, GIS mappers, and needs assessment field monitors – all of whom had degree-level qualifications and half of whom were volunteers.

These arrangements in the Capital were replicated in the five operational field (sub-national) coordination 'hubs', albeit on a slightly smaller scale. Such levels of investment are required during large scale disaster events – a lesson learned (and applied) by the WASH Cluster during the Cyclone Sidr response in Bangladesh in 2007 [the organigram for which can be found at www.clustercoordination.org]

In the Jogyakarta earthquake response a year later, similar numbers of architectural students from the Gadja Mada University were involved in such information management practices – with over 300 volunteer enumerators working on survey work at one point, as well as others supporting the Cluster's technical working groups (TWiGs) with computer aided design (CAD) technology. All virtually free of cost.

For smaller scale interventions, however, separating the role of coordination from programme responsibilities within the Cluster Lead Agency is neither financially nor operationally justifiable. A single person might have to act in both capacities in such an event – so called 'double hatting'. In such cases, the coordinator must go to great lengths not to compromise his or her impartiality, and must always make it clear in what capacity he or she is speaking.

Where the Cluster Coordinator has had limited exposure to the rough and tumble of international humanitarian coordination management, or is a national of the affected country, thought must be given to transferring skills and/or protecting his or her independence by having an 'international' mentor.

International
- Cluster Coordinator
- Deputy Cluster Coordinator (Mentor or NGO Rep)
- Information Manager
- Assessments Officer
- Technical Adviser (from the Cluster Lead Agency or an NGO)
- Reports Officer (p/t; Intern)
- Funds Officer (if fund-holding)
- Press Officer (p/t)

National
- Secretary / Fixer
- Data Manager
- GIS Manager
- Driver (s)
- Translator

THE THREE ESSENTIALS OF COORDINATION MANAGEMENT

There are three coins balanced in a single hand on the cover for a reason.

The entire Cluster coordination process (represented by a hand which hints of the need for balance and skill) can be distilled into the extent to which the coordinator (and his or her team) engages traditional and non-traditional Cluster partners in three areas of work (represented by the coins):

- Collectively agreeing a strategic operational framework which outlines the overall approach while allowing for diversity in programme orientation

- Timely sharing of reliable and relevant evidence that points out the need for mutual cooperation in adapting on-going programmes to the evolving needs and priorities of others

- Formulating and sharing the most appropriate technical practices

To reflect these observations, experience has consistently shown that there are three key mechanisms that need to be set up and managed by the Cluster Coordinator as the person to whom representation of the Cluster Lead Agency has been delegated. Each involves individual tasks which can be delegated to the coordination team or other Cluster members as required. Each mechanism is formal, and is accountable to the entire Cluster (peer) Group through the Cluster Coordinator:

> **Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)**
> **Technical Working Groups' (TWiGs)**
> **Information Management Working Group' (IMWiG**)

STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)

- The Cluster Coordinator would be well advised to set up a 'Strategic Advisory Group' (SAG) once meetings have more than 20 agencies and/or 30 people attending. This group is a small, representative sub-set of the wider Cluster membership, and is needed simply to allow decision-making to take place on behalf of a much larger 'plenary' group. The aim is to have twelve to fifteen people around the table.

- Each SAG member represents a specific stakeholder group, each of which will change depending on the type of crisis being faced, the scale, and the phase. For example, Donors will be heavily represented during the initial two weeks of a crisis, but are likely to reduce their presence thereafter. Representatives should 'self-select' from within their particular groups. For example, three international NGOs are requested to join, one small and two large. It is left to the NGOs to decide among themselves who considers themselves to be large and who small, and which three will represent. If necessary, these representatives can rotate.

- The Government representative should co-chair the SAG wherever possible, with the other co-chair being either the Cluster Coordinator or any of the other SAG members in rotation.

- SAG meetings are called by the Cluster Coordinator according to need. As a guide, this is likely to be three or four times in the first week of response, becoming weekly for the next three weeks, and monthly thereafter. Meetings should be held according to 'Chatham House Rules' i.e comments are incorporated but are not attributable to any particular organization.

- Should the Cluster decide it wants a SAG-type management mechanism, Terms of Reference should be agreed by the entire membership as one of the first actions of the Cluster. These TORs should ideally contain:

  - Agree SAG composition and way of working, including Terms of Reference;
  - Draw up and agree Terms of Reference for Cluster Partners;

SAG MEMBERS
- Government Focal Point
- Cluster Coordinator
- Donors x 3
- Large Int'l NGOs x 2
- Small Int'l NGO
- National NGO Forum Rep
- IFRC
- Early Recovery Cluster
- Other related Clusters
+ (if required)
- OCHA Inter-Cluster Coord
- ICRC
- Red Cross/Crescent National Society
- Military Liaison

- Formulate and agree the Cluster's 'Strategic Operational Framework' (SOF); ensure formal ratification by Government; ensure complementarity with government policies and plans at local level; update regularly according to evolving needs; and hold partners to account against this framework
- Formulate and agree the Cluster workplan; and provide strategic oversight of its application by Cluster partners;
- Establish 'Technical Working Groups' (TWIGs) as required and hold such groups accountable to Terms of Reference agreed by the SAG; ensure proper representation within such groups; ensure timely output; ensure transparent reporting; and close such groups;
- Formulate and agree advocacy positions on behalf of the Cluster partners;
- Provide strategic planning oversight for effective and efficient allocation of resources by Cluster partners;
- Provide strategic oversight on integration of cross-Cluster planning and inclusion of cross-cutting issues (in close cooperation with the OCHA Cluster Coordinator);
- Agree performance indicators, and method by which these will be measured;
- Ensure appropriate technical standards are agreed and consistently applied;
- Support the Cluster Lead Coordinator in setting up dedicated mechanisms and systems for transparent and equitable allocation and monitoring of 'pooled' funds available to the Cluster;
- Oversight technical, financial, and functional capacities of Cluster partners
- Oversight quality assurance, market price fluctuations, and quantities available from local and/or national markets;
- Ensure coherence of public messaging
- Ensure the Cluster Lead upholds its responsibilities by applying both Cluster and Cluster partner Terms of Reference
- It is the responsibility of the Cluster Coordinator to ensure that outputs from SAG meetings are brought to the attention of, and followed up with relevant authorities, promulgated in plenary coordination meetings, reflected in Situation Reports (which provide the working 'frame-of-reference' for the Cluster membership and beyond), and posted to the relevant web-site.

> **Essential SAG TORs**
> - collectively agrees a strategic operational framework that outlines the overall approach while allowing for diversity in programme orientation
> - advocates to government, other Clusters, and Donors for necessary change
> - transparently allocates resources
> - seeks proportionality of response actions
> - takes 'formal' responsibility for representing the collective Cluster position

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS (TWiGs)

- Set up as many 'Technical Working Groups' (TWiGs) as required to agree minimum standards and to formulate the most appropriate technical practices with which to attain those standards for each technical area requiring such input.

- For at least the first 4-6 weeks of a crisis, TWiGs will need to be managed by the Technical Advisor within the Cluster coordination team. For the Pakistan Floods response in 2007, this position was filled part-time for the Shelter Cluster by an INGO under a global pre-agreement with the Emergency Shelter Cluster.

- Technical Working Groups are established and provided Terms of Reference by the WASH Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) as required. Once the Cluster has decided that further technical discussion is required -- and any Cluster member can alert the Cluster Coordinator to the need for this at any time --- the Cluster Coordinator appoints a designated volunteer Focal Point to facilitate the work of the working group. Such groups have a limited life-span since they disband once the outputs delineated in the TORs have been achieved. Note that this may involve a 'flurry' of meetings.

- Composition of such groups is determined through a self-selection process depending on available technical skills, interest, and capacities from among the UN agencies, non-governmental, Governmental, commercial, and academic sectors. In principle, anyone can join such a group although, in practice, the Focal Point is advised not to let the group grow much beyond fifteen members. It may be that sub-groups need to be formed to explore specific issues. In this event, the TWiG Focal Point will appoint a responsible person to report back to the TWiG. The TWiG Focal Point is responsible for updating the Cluster on status of work-in-progress. Final outputs/recommendations of the TWiG are presented to Cluster stakeholders in plenary coordination meetings in oral and written form for feedback and comment. Once sufficient time has elapsed (not more than 48 hrs), the SAG will endorse the recommendations of the TWiG and post the written guideline to the appropriate web-site. Cluster

partners are then expected to apply such recommendations.

- Terms of Reference for TWiGs will be largely generic, but will include details of specific outputs required. Generic TORs will include:

    o Ensure relevant technical standards are formulated and agreed within the terms of reference and deadline set by SAG. This will include a review of existing materials and may culminate in an endorsement of existing guidelines, an addendum to existing guidelines, or production of completely new material
    o Recommend the quantity, quality, and price of materials to be produced, if applicable
    o Support the Cluster Coordinator in promoting such standards within the context of the Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)
    o Advise SAG on compliance issues connected with appliance of the agreed standards
    o Update the Cluster on status of work-in-progress and present final outputs/recommendations of the TWIG to Cluster stakeholders in oral and written form for feedback and comment
    o Ensure a TWIG membership that is representative of the wider Cluster stakeholder groups, and ensure that relevant technical skill-sets are appropriate and available (advise the Cluster Coordinator if this is not the case)
    o Set up Sub-Working Groups as required
    o Ensure all Cluster stakeholders have the opportunity to feedback into the work of the TWIG prior to presentation to the Cluster in plenary, and SAG for ratification

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP (IMWiG)

- The crucial role played by Information Management in coordinating humanitarian action is now better appreciated than it was before the advent of the 'Cluster Approach'. The IM function requires a dedicated team consisting of an Information Manager, at least one Data Manager, and at least one Geographic Information Systems (GIS) manager.

- Establish an 'Information Management Working Group' (IMWiG) that ensures timely sharing of reliable and relevant evidence through joint information systems that:
    ➢ identifies those most in need
    ➢ tracks trends in coverage and access over time against key performance indicators
    ➢ highlights the need for mutual cooperation in adapting on-going programmes to the evolving needs and priorities of others
    ➢ captures relevant information from other Clusters
    ➢ makes use of, and manages content through dedicated IT and web-based resources

ROLE OF THE CLUSTER COORDINATOR

The planning, management, and information infrastructures are coordinated by a single focal point in the form of the 'Cluster Coordinator', through whom discussion and subsequent decision-making is channelled.

Cluster coordination is a thankless and almost impossible task as it usually involves leading a cluster of sceptics from a place they don't want to be to somewhere they don't want to go down a road they might not want to travel. But, that said, the Coordinator and his or her team are the only people paid to do the job – it is an additional task for everyone else.

The role demands an almost impossible blend of technical knowledge, relevant experience, and 'leadership'. As I once described to Sergio di Mello in Baghdad just before he was tragically murdered in the UN Canal Hotel bombing, "(sector) coordination requires (us all) to combine the skills of magician, juggler, diplomat, chairman of the board, chief negotiator, information manager, communications officer, team leader, finance officer, and boy scout … and all while trying to be gender sensitive and culturally aware … "

The perceived credibility of the Cluster Coordinator does not so much depend on his or her technical qualifications related to the sector concerned – important though some form of qualification is – but on how he or she demonstrates application of the correct management skills. This is not to be confused with 'personality' traits or 'leadership' skills which have tended to dominate the search for 'core competencies' until now. More important than any of this, though, is the extent to which the Cluster Coordinator can demonstrate independence from his or her Cluster Lead Agency 'parent' affiliation.

It is also important to realize that all clusters are not equal. Second, the more 'operational' clusters such as Logistics, Health, WASH, and Shelter have larger numbers of people, more material, and more money to deal with than the more technical clusters such as Education, Protection or Nutrition. This means inter-cluster decision making needs to reflect these operational realities by affording them more time to discuss their positions relative to one another and more 'weight' when it comes to resource allocation.

Specific responsibilities of the Cluster Lead Agency at the country level include ensuring the following:
- Inclusion of key humanitarian partners
- Establishment and maintenance of appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms
- Coordination with national/local authorities, State institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors
- Participatory and community-based approaches
- Attention to priority cross-cutting issues (e.g. age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights)
- Needs assessment and analysis
- Emergency preparedness
- Planning and strategy development
- Application of standards
- Monitoring and reporting
- Advocacy and resource mobilization
- Training and capacity building
- Provision of assistance or services as a last resort

DEVELOPING A CLUSTER STRATEGY

Shared strategic approaches allow multiple agencies with diverse mandates to achieve goals collectively that could not be achieved by individual approaches alone. Clusters are the expression of that collective realization and aim to provide the "enabling environment" that allows diversity to strengthen both the effectiveness and efficiency of aid delivery.

Planning and developing a strategy requires:

- The promotion of timely and preferably joint needs assessment and sector specific analysis. This should use appropriate methods and ground-truthing to ensure beneficiary participation. This includes the adequate attention that should be given to the needs and challenges specific to gender and of vulnerable groups.
- Identification of duplications and gaps in coverage taking into consideration the capacities and activities of both government and non-governmental actors.
- Using lessons learned from past actions and beneficiary feedback to revise strategies and action plans accordingly.
- Developing the transition to longer-term recovery programming in close consultation with the Early Recovery network. Completing the handover of the coordination role to other agencies, ensuring that coordination for residual needs is provided.

The 'Cluster Approach' calls for a strategic framework to be drafted on behalf of all Cluster partners and participants by a small team representing all stakeholder groups (see Terms of Reference for the Strategic Advisory Group - SAG).

Some Cluster Coordinators prefer to turn this into more of a framework document (a 'SOF' – or Strategic Operational Framework) which outlines operational ways of working together within the context of applicable principles and policies in addition to the strategy. This allows partners to develop their own strategies according to their own mandates, capabilities, capacities, and comparative advantages, while at the same time providing a road-map for coherent planning on behalf of all Cluster partners.

A SOF would have headings something like these:

XXX COORDINATION GROUP
[Country & Response]

STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

1.	INTRODUCTION	7.		STANDARDS
2.	GLOBAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES	8.		INTER-SECTORAL LINKAGES
3.	NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK	9.		CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES
4.	GOAL	10.		COORDINATION MANAGEMENT
5.	OBJECTIVES	10.1		Governance Structure
6.	STRATEGY	10.2		Technical Assistance
6.1	Prioritization:	10.3		Information Management
	▪ defined vulnerable groups	10.4		Monitoring performance
	▪ geographic	11.		DEFINITIONS
	▪ thematic			
	▪ phases			
6.2	Activities:			
6.3	Expected Outcomes			
6.4	Indicators			
6.5	Community Involvement			
6.6	Key assumptions			

HOW DOES CLUSTER COORDINATION ADD VALUE ?

Cluster coordination often has to be 'sold' those more sceptical of humanitarian reform in general and of the Cluster Approach in particular. It therefore requires explaining:

- ◆ To Donors that coordination
    - ▪ ensures appropriate programmatic responses
    - ▪ helps them select the best actors
    - ▪ reduces confusion between proposals
    - ▪ gets all of their potential implementers in the same room on the same page
    - ▪ ensures their programs fit with government strategy
    - ▪ allows their ideas to be heard and incorporated

- ◆ To International NGO's that coordination
    - ▪ reduces threat of overlapping
    - ▪ reduces conflict based on differing levels of provision
    - ▪ ensures local implementing partners are kept on the same page and have external support
    - ▪ gets their name up in lights
    - ▪ helps them meet donors
    - ▪ makes them look good to donors
    - ▪ makes them look good to government
    - ▪ makes them more powerful as a collective than an individual

- ◆ To program managers in International NGO's that coordination
    - ▪ provides free technical support as well as easy technical solutions for them to adopt or adapt
    - ▪ means they are part of a team
    - ▪ allows them to meet like-minded colleagues
    - ▪ increases their networking and future job opportunities
    - ▪ helps ensure they're not seen to be screwing up --- not more than anyone else anyway
    - ▪ helps them iron out problems with the government
    - ▪ helps them meet local implementing partners and donors

- ◆ To National NGO's it
    - ▪ helps them understand the wild circus that has come to town
    - ▪ helps them get a slice of the action
    - ▪ helps them understand why everything is taking so long
    - ▪ ensures their voice gets heard in the bigger picture
    - ▪ lets them meet potential donors or INGO partners
    - ▪ provides free training and technical advice
    - ▪ eases access to government
    - ▪ lets them represent the voice of the people better

- ◆ To Local Authorities
    - ▪ helps them understand the circus that has come to town
    - ▪ helps them appear under control

Clusters add value through:

- o Transfer of knowledge
- o Legitimacy through wider engagement and inclusivity
- o Coherence of standards
- o Leverage at national, local authority, and community level
- o Sharing of values
- o Joint strategic planning
- o Advocacy, with the Cluster speaking with one voice
- o Enhanced predictability
- o Increased transparency and accountability

- helps them get it all under control
- helps them mobilize more money for their community
- helps them meet whoever is doing all this stuff
- helps ensure their plans and regulations are seen and listened to
- introduces them to international standards and ensures adherence to them
- provides quality control and a complaints forum for publicly shaming bad players without running the risk of appearing anti-humanitarian
- provides a pre-designed format for coordination which they can effectively own
- brings a huge amount of international expertise to bear
- makes them look efficient in the Capital
- may even leave a few assets when the circus moves on

- For National Government
  - makes departments and line ministries look good in front of ministers
  - makes them look really good to donors
  - helps produce a united viewpoint that widens the funding pool
  - provides an easy solution for controlling the aid mayhem
  - provides international 'best practice' experience and technical advice
  - provides real time numbers on what is happening where and by whom
  - shows up outstanding needs
  - reduces duplication of effort
  - increases the likelihood of good quality work
  - puts them back in control, but in a cooperative style
  - provides someone to blame when things go wrong
  - but which allows the taking of credit when things go right
  - provides sustainable coordination models and information management tools

NATIONAL AND HUB LEVEL COORDINATION

As a general principle, the more 'grounded' coordination is in the practical realities of field-based operations, the better it is. Coordination at sub-national (or 'Hub') level therefore focuses on village-by-village detail of who is doing – or planning to do – what, and where. In the early days of disaster response, this may mean drawing maps and sticking in pins to show distributions of agencies and materials on a geographic basis. Meetings will tend to focus on updating each other on a daily basis about operational, logistical, and administrative challenges, the general evolution of the situation, needs assessed, needs met, and resources still required.

At the national level, coordination is more focused on strategic approaches across the whole affected area. This requires:
- negotiating coordination mechanisms
- formulation of common inter-clusteral policies with the host-government
- agreeing strategic direction with counterpart line ministries
- ensuring coherent technical practices
- planning joint needs assessments, and
- providing centralised evidence-based justification for resource mobilization, especially funding.

Unless the disaster is extremely large-scale, common services such as map-making are generally provided from the Capital as this is where economies-of-scale accrue. In time, when strategic and technical matters have been decided, needs fully assessed, and priorities decided, the role evolves to one of 'oversight'. This means monitoring the quality of service delivery, evaluating impact, ensuring that needs continue to be properly met, and that no new gaps in aid delivery are emerging. It is at this stage that Cluster coordination meetings become less frequent in the Capital and focus more on 'early recovery' planning, even while continuing regularly in the field. At this point, human resources may be relocated down to the field level.

The two 'loci' of coordination are therefore different, and require different skill-sets. But both are equally required, and are complementary one to the other. More importantly, both levels require similar resourcing.

LIFESPAN OF CLUSTERS
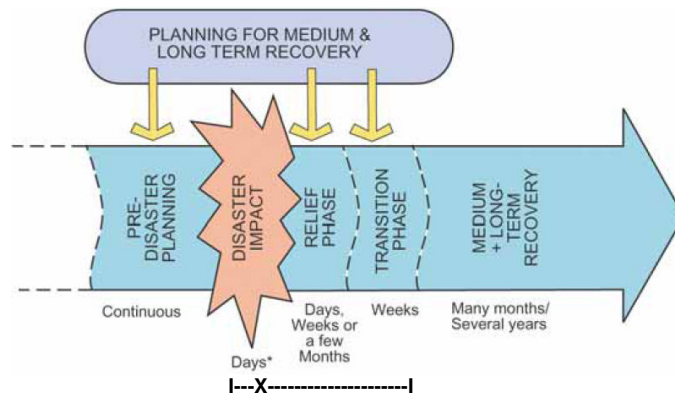
There is a formal process for establishing the Cluster Approach at country level.

In brief, once it becomes clear that an emergency situation has arisen, the RC consults with national authorities and relevant IASC partners at global and country level.

(S)he then forms a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) consisting of the UNCT plus representatives from Government, the Red Cross–Red Crescent Movement, and the NGO community. Henceforward, all decisions regarding response to the emergency are taken by this team.

The HCT will determine which Clusters are the most appropriate for each particular emergency. Negotiation will be needed to decide which Clusters are to be convened, and who should be assigned to lead them as Cluster Lead Agencies (CLA's). This decision is then formalized by the RC, who, in rapid-onset situations, has by now become the HC as well, in a letter to the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

At global level, there are 11 Clusters:
- Agriculture [FAO]
- Camp Coordination Camp Management [UNHCR and IOM]
- Early Recovery Network [UNDP]
- Education [UNICEF and Save The Children]
- Emergency Shelter [UNHCR and IFRC]
- Emergency Telecommunications [WFP]
- Health [WHO]
- Logistics [WFP]
- Nutrition [UNICEF]
- Protection [UNHCR]
  - Child Protection [UNICEF]
  - Gender-Based Violence [UNFPA and UNICEF]
  - Mine Action [UNMAS]
  - HLP [UNHABITAT]
  - Rule of Law and Justice [UNDP and OHCHR]
- Water Sanitation and Hygiene [UNICEF]

Ordinarily, country arrangements will mirror these although it should be noted that any IASC member can be a CLA – it does not have to be a UN agency – and that any permutation is possible. For example, the nutrition sector can sometimes be found merged into the Health Cluster; WFP or FAO might become CLA for a 'food security' Cluster. There is also an increasing trend to appoint Cluster Co-Leads. For example, in Zimbabwe, the WASH Cluster is co-led by UNICEF and Oxfam.

Ideally, national authorities will be fully involved and endorse the Cluster Approach as the way the humanitarian community organises itself. While this is not an absolute requirement, it is the responsibility of the RC/HC to ensure that the mechanism adopted aligns with that of the Government.

Clusters need not wait for formal endorsement by the HCT, but should convene as soon as the need for a coordinated response becomes clear to any single potential Cluster member.

Clusters are established during the preparedness phase if possible, and phase out during the early recovery transition. Sometimes, this will involve Clusters 'merging' or 'reversing' into others to become sub-Clusters or working groups. Sometimes, the Cluster will 'morph' into a different but related entity. In countries facing small-scale sudden-onset disasters on a cyclical basis, the Cluster may go dormant as the longer-term and more 'developmental' sectoral approach re-asserts itself.

Either way, the decision to phase out of emergency activities is a formal process requiring ratification by the HC. Compliance with the following criteria should be demonstrated before any such measure is taken:

- Cluster objectives in terms of meeting relief needs have been met (note 'goods in the pipeline' does not fulfill this criteria)
- Capacities of the agency to whom responsibility is being handed over are sufficient
- Local authorities are in agreement
- No related Cluster objects i.e their programmes won't be jeopardized by premature hand-over

WHY DON'T ALL AGENCIES COORDINATE AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENGAGE THEM ?

The following table outlines the principal barriers to effective coordination and gives examples of possible solutions to the resultant challenges.

COORDINATION CHALLENGES FOR CLUSTERS		
CHALLENGE	**PROBLEM**	**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**
1 Cluster Lead is not perceived as an independent 'honest broker'	Providing advisory services to Government, and competing for funds is seen as compromising impartiality, independence, and neutrality in times of humanitarian crisis	Provide real-time 'best' technical advice (from RO, HQ, or Collaborating Centre); Ensure the Cluster Coordinator facilitates (and does not take over) the peer review process; split coordination and programme functions
2 Agency autonomy is threatened	Individuals and organisations fear that coordination will reduce their freedom to make decisions and run their own programmes	Demonstrate that collective problem-solving leads to consensual decision-making, while still allowing freedom of action within programmes
3 Knowledge is assumed	Not all agencies will have the same or requisite knowledge on which to base their decisions; technical language may differ	Provide technical input from respected third party sources (see point 1) ;
4 Understanding of language is assumed	The UN language is not the mother tongue of all participants	Remind all participants that there will always be linguistic mis-understanding; introduce simultaneous translation services; translate documents and websites; do meeting notes on powerpoint in the UN language in real time
5 Domain Consensus is challenged	Organisations differ over: • the right of a particular organisation to be involved • geographic areas of responsibility • sub-sectoral responsibilities • beneficiary groups to be served • prioritisation of needs • programme approaches	Having agreed the overall policy framework within the SOF, compromise can be reached on most 'domain' issues; from then on, downstream products and projects should be agreed and tracked by relevant sub-committees
6 All organisations are not equal	That certain organisations dominate both the agenda and the ensuing decision-making process	Rotate the chair; ensure that the 'usual suspects' aren't allowed to dominate
7 Multiple organizations	Too many UN agencies and NGOs	Establish a small 'Strategic Advisory Group' (SAG) made up of all stakeholder groups
8 Donors take unilateral action	By acting unilaterally, by linking (politically), and by earmarking (vertical projects), donors undermine the collective effort	Mainstream the 'Good Donorship Initiative', including (trust) fund pooling and joint reporting
9 Decision-makers do not attend meetings	Agencies constantly refer to headquarters before committing resources	Delegate authority as much as possible; allow remote decision-makers and influencers to 'attend' meetings virtually
10 Organizations hesitate to share results of assessments	Smaller Cluster members are concerned that their methodologies are not sufficiently rigorous, and will not stand up to public scrutiny	Re-assure Cluster members that all submissions are anonymous unless stated otherwise
11 Credit for success is diffused	Acknowledgement of individuals and agencies gets lost through the collective approach	SAG endorsement is arguably a more powerful 'product' when it comes to external relations
12 Resources are slow to mobilise and/or are insufficient	Inadequate leadership skills, knowledge, or experience; high staff turn-over; cost-benefit of coordination is not evident; IM resources are inadequate	Investment in IT, data management personnel, and full-time information & communication personnel is always cost-effective.
13 Lack of Trust	Participating agencies may have a history of poor relations	Field operations are usually more to do with personality than agency. Good 'leadership' and 'team-building' can finesse this aspect
14 Dilution of Visibility	Participating agencies see each other as competitors	Mainstream SWAp equivalents into short-term donor funding methodologies
15 Absence of Sanction	Agencies and Individuals do not do what they say they are going to do and are 'economical with the truth' about pipeline supplies	Monitor agency actions to identify delivery failures. If persistent, name and shame; ensure that only supplies confirmed as in the country or in the pipeline are included in commodity tracking matrices
16 Lack of Commitment	Risk aversion in public, capacity, policy, funds, sensitivity, need to clarify with HQ	Time limit decision; negotiate before or after meeting; often opts-out but does not veto
17 Sensitivity	Will not say what they really feel in public meetings	Identify donors (and media): remind all of 'Chatham House' rules

FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES FRAMEWORK OF PARTNERS

This table is taken from the Health Cluster coordination handbook (p.34-35)

FUNCTIONS	CLA REPRESENTATIVE	CLUSTER COORDINATOR	CLUSTER PARTNERS
i. Coordination mechanisms and inclusion of all stakeholders within and between Clusters	A	R	R S
ii. Stakeholder Relations, including with national authorities and other local actors	A R	R	S C I
iii. Needs assessment, monitoring and analysis, including gap identification	A	R	R S C
iv. Strategy development and planning, including community based approaches, attention to priority cross-cutting issues, and filling gaps	A	R	R S
v. Contingency planning	A R	R	R
vi. Application of standards	R S	R S	A R
vii. Training and capacity-building, including emergency preparedness	A	S	R S C
viii. Advocacy and Resource Mobilization, including reporting	A R	S C	S C
ix. Communication, including Media Relations	A R	S C	C
x. Provider of last resort	A R	S	S C

R = Responsible: Those who do the work to achieve the task. There can be multiple resources responsible.

A = Accountable: The person/people ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the task.

S = Support: Those who may help in the task.

C = Consulted: Those whose opinions are sought in a two way communication.

I = Informed: Those who are kept up to date on progress through two way communication.

FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THE CLUSTER LEAD AGENCY …

The actions outlined in the table below are adapted from a matrix developed by Global Cluster Leads.

Note that many of the actions defined as the responsibility of the Head of the Cluster Lead Agency can be – even should be – delegated to the Cluster Coordinator depending on his/her seniority and experience. In a large-scale, rapid-onset emergency, in-coming Cluster Coordinators are likely to be similar in grade.

AREA OF WORK	HEAD OF CLUSTER LEAD AGENCY	CLUSTER COORDINATOR
i. Coordination and inclusion	- Appoint (hire) dedicated CC - Ensure regular meetings - Ensure CC attends ICCG - Help CC find solutions to strategic Cluster challenges - Help RC/HC and HCT determine overall direction of humanitarian action - Support RC/HC in advocating to Government, Donors etc. - Help RC/HC understand sectoral and inter-sectoral issues - Support HCT in resolving sectoral and inter-sectoral issues	- Identify and engage with all sector stakeholders - Identify existing coordination mechanisms - Hold regular Cluster coordination meetings building on existing coordination for a - Collect who, what, where, when (4W) information and feed to ICCG IM working group - Provide consolidated feedback to Cluster partners and other Clusters - Represent the Cluster at ICCG meetings - Contribute to jointly identifying critical issues that require multi-sectoral responses, and plan interventions with other relevant Clusters
ii. Coordination with national and	- Maintain appropriate links and dialogue with State authorities, local civil society, and other relevant actors (e.g national and international military forces) whose activities affect humanitarian space - Work with RC/HC to identify a single government counterpart for each Cluster	Identify and build a relationship with the single government (line ministry) counterpart identified.
iii. Needs assessment, analysis, and gap identification	- Make CLA technical expertise and other resources available for Cluster and joint needs assessments - Participate in the analysis of data and information on risks, vulnerabilities, status, and resources - Monitor service performance - Ensure establishment or early warning and response systems (EWARS) - Advise RC/HC and HCT on sector-specific issues and priorities - Work with HCT to determine overall humanitarian priorities based on assessed need	- Assess and monitor the availability of services in the affected areas using capacity mapping and gap analysis tools - Identify immediate humanitarian needs using rapid assessment tools (IRA, RAT) adapted to the local context, and ensure later in-depth sub-sectoral assessment - Mobilise Cluster partners to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of information flows - Regularly report on services delivered, outstanding needs, and main constraints to service delivery
iv. Strategy development & gap-filling	- Participate actively in gap analysis, priority-setting and development of a crisis response strategy and Cluster action plan - Ensure that humanitarian responses build on local capacities and that the needs, contributions and capacities of vulnerable groups (not just women and children) are addressed - Ensure that Cluster strategies take appropriate account of national policies, strategies, and lessons learned - Ensure incorporation of an appropriate phase-out / transition strategy for the Cluster - Ensure that early recovery components are identified and exploited as early as possible in sectoral and inter-sectoral responses, and that risk reduction measures are incorporated into Cluster strategies - Work with the HCT on formulating advice for the RC/HC on how best to resolve conflicting, duplicated, and contradictory Cluster strategies and action plans	- Lead and contribute to the joint Cluster analysis of sector information leading to joint identification of gaps in the sectoral response, and reach agreement on priorities that inform the evolution and adaptation of the Cluster response strategy - Provide leadership and strategic direction to the Cluster in agreeing response strategies and priorities, and planning coordinated action to address critical un-covered gaps - In protracted crises or when addressing recovery, ensure appropriate links among humanitarian actions and longer-term sector plans – incorporating the concept of 'build back better' and specific risk reduction measures wherever possible

v. Contingency planning & preparedne	• Participate actively in Cluster and inter-agency contingency planning and preparedness for new events according to scenarios agreed by the HCT • Work with the RC/HC to determine the overall contingency planning process/cycle	• Lead joint Cluster contingency planning for potential new events
vi. Application of Standards	• Ensure that all Cluster partners are aware of relevant national policy guidelines, technical standards, and internationally-recognized best practices • Where national standards are not in line with international standards (bearing in mind they are sometimes higher), negotiate adoption of the latter • Advise the RC/HC on sectoral standards to promote and highlight their implications for humanitarian action	• Promote adherence of standards and best practices by all Cluster partners, taking into account the need for adaptation to the local context • Promote use of the (WASH) Cluster and SPHERE handbook to ensure the application of common and coherent approaches, tools, and standards • Facilitate linkages between Cluster partners and technical advisers outside the country
vii. Training & Capacity-building	• Promote and support the training of staff and capacity-building of humanitarian partners, including national authorities and civil society, to assure appropriate and sustainable services • Inform RC/HC about training and capacity-building activities being undertaken by UNICEF on behalf of Cluster partners	• Identify urgent training needs in relation to technical standards and protocols for the delivery of key services and ensure their adoption of uniform applications by all Cluster partners • Source and disseminate technical materials agreed by the Cluster (or technical working groups established by the Cluster) • Organize technical workshops for all Cluster partners, including national and local authorities
viii. Monitoring & Reporting	• Produce and disseminate Cluster SitReps and regular bulletins using input from the Cluster Coordinator • Advocate for Donors to fund priority activities of all Cluster partners in line with priorities outlined in Cluster strategies • Represent the interests of Cluster partners in discussions with the HCT and RC/HC on resource mobilization priorities	• Ensure the regular and proactive involvement of Cluster partners in sharing information and monitoring of individual and common plans of action • Collate and disseminate information relevant to the Cluster as a whole in Cluster SitReps and bulletins
ix. Advocacy & Resource mobilizatio	• Represent Cluster (not just UNICEF) interests in media events • Provide the RC/HC with advice on issues of particular concern regarding funding constraints, government involvement, and donor action	• Provide leadership and strategic direction to the Cluster in developing sector-specific components of appeals documents (Flash Appeal, CERF, CAP, CHAP) and other inter-agency planning and funding documents
x. Provider of last resort	• Act as the 'provider of last resort (subject to access, security, and financial constraints) to meet priority needs identified by the Cluster • Inform the RC/HC, regional office, and headquarters of financial, human, and material needs and work with them to secure the necessary resources • Discuss gaps with HCT over POLR constraints and give voice to participants over related concerns and gaps	• Inform the UNICEF Representative of priority gaps that Cluster partners are unable or unwilling to fill, and that might require UNICEF action as provider of last resort

CHECKLIST OF KEY PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

TO DO	TO CONSIDER
1. Conduct hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment in urban and rural areas	• RO will help with this if consultancy not available locally
2. Agree preferred rapid assessment tool with UNCT and identify who will join the team	• Preferably a joint assessment but on a sectoral basis if necessary
3. Join RC in joint contingency planning and simulation exercise	• RO will help with this
4. Identify likely NGO partners and prepare partnership agreements outlining who will do what, where based on an assessment of capacities	
5. Identify Cluster Coordinator for: • WASH • Education • Protection • Nutrition • (Telecoms)	• Pending a request to RO to provide 'surge' • Nutrition may be a sub-Cluster within Food Security • Child protection is likely to be a Sub-Cluster (or working group) within the Protection Cluster • Global Cluster Lead for Health is WHO • Save The Children is Global Co-Cluster Lead for Education
6. Identify and get to know your Government counterpart and re-iterate his/her role within the Cluster	• How the Cluster Approach can 'add value' to national government and local authorities (see below)
7. Identify key informants from within each stakeholder group	Stakeholder Groups include: • Donors • Government • NGOs (national and international) • CBOs • Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, IFRC, National Society) • Other Sectors • RC's Office (and/or OCHA) • Academic institutions • Private sector
8. Ensure pre-crisis baseline statistics are agreed with other Cluster Leads, including population denominators (per District) disaggregated as far as possible by gender and age	Age breakdowns should include percentages of: • Children less than 5 years of age • School-age children • Female-headed households • Elderly (over 65 years of age)
9. Prepare blank A0-size map with administrative boundaries and key names / locations	The more multiple overlays that can be prepared, the better. For example, in WASH, prepare a map with overlays for: • Areas at risk of natural hazard • Population density • Water scarcity / pollution • Areas of operation for each organization in the sector (not all of equal size)
10. Prepare an outline CERF funding proposal	
11. Clarify coordination arrangements between UNCT / HCT and Cluster Lead Agencies	Does the HCT take on inter-Cluster coordination responsibilities or is this delegated to a separate inter-Cluster forum (e.g ICCG)
12. Identify and make informal agreement with potential local suppliers, including transportation and warehousing	
13. Identify projected additional staffing needs (surge and/or re-deployment of existing staff), clarify reporting lines within an organigram and draft TORs for each position	
14. Ensure IT work-from-home capacities exist for	Rep, Deputy, Ops

essential staff	
15. List all available stocks in the (sub) region, and let Supplies Div know of any likely immediate requirements	
16. Sectoral performance standards and indicators identified and agreed per sector	To be adapted and/or ratified as soon as the Cluster is established

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CLUSTER LEAD AGENCIES

These ten areas of work are taken from the Terms of Reference agreed by the IASC for Cluster Lead Agencies at country level. Some have been combined to provide a more coherent understanding of the responsibilities involved.

i.   Coordination mechanisms and inclusion of all stakeholders
ii.   Coordination with national authorities and other local actors
iii. **Needs assessment and analysis, including gap identification**
iv.   **Strategy development and planning, including community based approaches, attention to priority cross-cutting issues, and filling gaps**
v.   Contingency planning and preparedness
vi.   Application of standards
vii. Training and capacity-building
viii. Monitoring and reporting
ix.   Advocacy and resource mobilization, including reporting
x.   Provider of last resort

Among these ten areas of work, two (iii and iv) are central to improved humanitarian action, and represent the essence of humanitarian reform. This is why they have been highlighted.

All humanitarian actors are expected to focus on achieving cross-Cluster success in these two areas. All other areas of work allow for, and/or support this goal – and therefore success as a humanitarian community in providing effective action efficiently.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION ARCHITECTURE

These roles and responsibilities clarify the humanitarian architecture at country level. They are currently being agreed among Global Cluster Leads working together.

RESIDENT / HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR (RC/HC)
- The overall goal of the RC/HC is to provide leadership and coordination to ensure appropriate and effective humanitarian action.
- The RC/HC establishes and convenes the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).
- The HC has a key role in all areas of work of the Clusters and should meet with Cluster Leads regularly.

HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT)
- The overall goal of the HCT is to set policy, resolve issues, and advise the RC/HC.
- The HCT is considered the ultimate platform for decision-making and coordination of humanitarian action.
- The HCT is headed by the RC/HC and comprises Heads of UN agencies, and representatives from the NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- Heads of agencies who also lead Clusters represent both their agency and their Clusters in this forum.
- As the UN Country Team (UNCT) is made up only of heads of UN agencies, any positions taken on the humanitarian situation should feed into discussions at the HCT.
- Likewise, any collective positions taken by the NGO community (through, say, the NGO Forum) should be fed into the HCT.

INTER-CLUSTER COORDINATION GROUP (ICCG)
- The overall goal of the ICCG is to ensure technical and operational collaboration between Clusters while integrating key cross-cutting and sub-sectoral issues.
- The ICCG is headed by an Inter-Cluster Coordinator (usually OCHA) appointed by the RC/HC, and comprises only Cluster Coordinators and a government representative (preferably as co-chair). Where the crisis is deemed too small (by the HCT) to warrant such a dedicated position, this role will be fulfilled by the RC/HC or one of the Cluster Coordinators designated by him/her. Other stakeholders may attend but only as observers.
- It is the responsibility of this group to ensure that cross-cutting issues (e.g age, diversity, gender, HIV-AIDS, environment) and sub-sectoral issues (e.g sexual & gender-based violence, psycho-social, mental health) are discussed, and agreed solutions acted upon within respective Clusters. Focal Points for cross-cutting and sub-sectoral issues may be invited to the ICCG on an ad hoc basis, but are not permanent members.

CLUSTER LEAD AGENCY (CLA)
- CLA Heads are responsible for fulfilling their Cluster coordination obligations as per the agreed terms of reference for CLAs at country level, and are accountable to both their agencies and the RC/HC for doing so.
- CLA Heads are expected to mobilize sufficient human, financial, and material resources within their Country Offices to fulfil their Cluster obligations.
- The CLA is responsible for appointing a Cluster Coordinator and any other support staff needed for effective functioning of the Cluster.
- Cluster Coordinators are considered to be staff members of the CLA. This applies to locally hired consultants as well as visiting members of Global Cluster Lead 'surge' rosters. They work for, and report to, the CLA Head. However, they are expected to be independent and impartial in representing the collective views of the Cluster they represent. These views will not always accord with the views of parent agency.

CLUSTER PARTNERS
- Each Cluster is expected to represent all stakeholders working in, or planning to work in the sector. These include *inter alia*:
  - Government
  - Local Authorities
  - Donors
  - UNICEF technical representative (when not serving as Cluster Coordinator)
  - NGOs (National and International)

- Community-based Organisations (CBOs)
- The Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement (including ICRC, if present, as an observer)
- The private sector (including academic institutions)
- Coordinators from other related Clusters (including the Early Recovery adviser)

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR FIRST 7 DAYS ARE …

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOR THE (IN-COMING) CLUSTER COORDINATOR	
TO DO	**TO CONSIDER**
Contact key informants	Stakeholder Groups include: • Donors • Government • NGOs (national and international) • CBOs • Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, IFRC, National Society) • Other Sectors • RC's Office (and/or OCHA) • Academic institutions • Private sector
Meet and establish a relationship with your Government counterpart	• It may be necessary to involve the Head of Agency and/or the RC/HC in identifying the *single* person within Government responsible for the sector. • Be prepared to brief your government counterpart daily, and even consider drafting his or her presentations
Meet RC/HC and his/her coordination team	• Ensure that both parties understand what to expect of the other • Clarify who will carry out inter-cluster coordination (obtain contact details)
Attend security briefing	• Mandatory for UN staff and advisable for others
Attend general coordination meeting	• Be prepared to give a brief summary of what the Cluster membership is doing and what coordination mechanisms are being put in place • Put a poster on the wall in the RC/HC's office informing visitors how to contact you
Familiarise yourself with the Cluster Lead's Emergency Preparedness Plan and the UNCT's latest contingency plan	• If not yet in-country, obtain these prior to departure
Contact and meet other Cluster Coordinators	• Often best done informally
Conduct initial Who, What, Where, When (4W) assessment with Cluster partners	• Do this by phone using 'partner profile' forms. • Get partners to fill in forms by hand during coordination meetings (see p. xx) • Information Manager to collate information into simple 'monitoring matrix'
Plan immediate priority actions	• In accordance with the outline strategy
Identify Information Manager	• Likely to be national staff in the first instance with no prior training in information management • Put him or her in contact with the Global Cluster Lead Information Management Focal Point • Ensure (s)he coordinates with the ICCG and/or IM working group (possibly a Humanitarian Information Centre sent by OCHA)
Agree an initial outline strategy	• This need not be detailed but should at least orient Cluster partners to national policies, goals, and objectives
Visit the affected area	• If more than a 24hr mission, make sure a deputy has been appointed to cover for your absence
Make sure the joint Rapid Needs Assessment is being collated	• Don't wait too long for joint assessment protocols and questionnaires to be developed; if necessary, go it alone
Ensure national and international NGOs input into the Flash Appeal (or equivalent)	• Write the strategy yourself as this will reflect the strategy already agreed by the Cluster • Be prepared to distil proposals into the FA format yourself and even write them yourself on behalf of a NNGO who has briefed you by phone

MANAGING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS …

Any meeting with more than thirty attendees or twenty different organizations is, by definition, a 'large' meeting.

Coordination meetings are important events as they guide operational partners and other stakeholders through a process which starts with the rather passive sharing of useful planning information, and which goes on stimulate cooperation within and between Clusters. For this reason, and despite some sometimes rather loud voices to the contrary, such meetings should be treated as formal occasions – even though the 'style' of the person chairing will tend to be informal.

If he or she is up to it, the government counterpart should co-chair (but not chair) the meeting. Usually, the government representative is only too happy for the Cluster Coordinator to manage proceedings. Be careful, though, to let the government open proceedings and make sure you know their attitude to 'cluster governance' before the meeting starts. The Health Cluster got this badly wrong during the Lebanon-Israel conflict by failing to clarify the role of Hezbollah viz-a-viz the Beirut authorities beforehand.

Similarly, with the government of the Philippines having adopted the Cluster Approach wholesale, cluster partners are 'obliged' to follow government diktat as they chair all coordination meetings; a position somewhat contradictory to the ideals of the humanitarian imperative, especially where the same government is busy oppressing its own people – as is the case in Mindanao and Darfur, for example.

That said, try to avoid giving the 'top table' impression as the aim of the Coordinator is not to be authoritarian but is to create an enabling environment where a balance is achieved between 'robust' decision-making (which can only really be achieved with an evidence-base and strategic framework to guide negotiations) and the engendering of trust in the Cluster (Lead) Coordinator as independent 'honest broker', while allowing the "voice of the smaller partners to be heard" (see generic Cluster Lead guidance note).

Early meetings (i.e in the first week of a crisis response) tend to focus on needs assessments, who is doing what where, and what is in the pipeline. These require flip-charts and plenary discussions. Subjects outside these areas need more detailed consideration and should be assigned to ad-hoc working groups set up for the specific purpose (see SAG and TWIG TORs). As discussions become more detailed some weeks after onset of crisis, consideration should be given to using real-time projection of data, not least because this reduces the amount of paper and colour printing required.

The Cluster Coordination team comprises a Coordinator, an Information Manager, and a Technical Adviser (plus national support staff). The Information Manager will convene a Working Group comprising NGO information managers, volunteers from Statistical departments of local Universities, OCHA's HIC, and the Government information service. This group is set up from the outset with TORs agreed by the SAG. Similarly, the Technical adviser will convene a Working Group (plus relevant Sub-Working Groups as required) to cover technical issues associated with emergency and transitional shelter and sheltering provision, including shelter-related non-food items.

MEETING MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

BEFORE MEETING	
Action	**Comments**
Confirm room booking	• Probably hotel for first week or so
Inform OCHA and HIC of time / venue / frequency of meeting	• Ensure it is correct and posted on relevant office/corridor walls (posters) and websites
Send draft agenda to e-mail list	• Request input from the partners; use GoogleGroup[1] or similar for list management; make sure the agenda is realistic, does not have too many items on it, and that the items are sequenced logically (see example). Put major and/or difficult items first. Attach meeting notes from the previous meeting.

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[1] Cluster participants request the webmaster (Cluster Information Manager) to join the Partner List. The beauty of this method is that individuals can de-select themselves at any time.

Seating arrangements for 100 people + standing room for 100 more	• Sit at a large round table, or, at a separate table at the same level with the other participants surrounding in a semi-circle. Ensure adequate seating/standing room for all.
Sign at entrance to building and on Door	
How to join / contact Cluster Poster on wall	
Other posters on wall as space allows	• Switch Off phones / No Smoking / No guns • Coordination Aims • Barriers to coordination • Principles of coordination
Map facing audience	• As big as possible
Mobile Amplification • Two amplifiers • Two Desktop microphones • Two wireless microphones (+spare batteries)	• IT Cluster / Office technician in-room standing by
Simultaneous Translation	• Best is to have (commercial) electronic systems available, otherwise, each and every sentence has to be translated which doubles the length of the meeting or halves the agenda items covered. Alternatives such as positioning volunteer translators throughout the audience don't work very well unless the meeting is conducted in the local language with translation into the relevant UN language. • Recording and projecting meeting notes in real time is an aid to inclusivity and understanding as many nationals will have time to understand the written word
Print 2 x Attendance sheets	• Cover sheet + 2 blanks (stapled) on a clipboard if possible
Hard copies of agenda, previous meeting notes, maps, matrices etc on every other chair	• Prepare these well in advance; staple the last set together no later than 1 hr before the meeting
Water available for (Co-) Chairs	• Small bottles
Arrange for coffee/tea and biscuits outside *after* the meeting	• Coffee/Tea and biscuits are *essential* as it engenders much goodwill and enables discussions to take place in the margins of the main meeting which are often every bit as useful as the main meeting itself
Appoint Meeting Note taker from Secretariat or Participants	• Should be a native speaker of the language in which the meeting is conducted. This is not as easy as it looks. It should *not* be the Coordinator him/herself if at all possible; Usually, the Assistant Coordinator (secondee from National NGO should be requested).

DURING MEETING	
Action	**Comments**
Call meeting to order	• Start on time unless the government rep has failed to turn up, in which allow ten minutes extra. Explain the delay to all, but make it clear this is a one-off arrangement. (Tip: Tap an empty glass with a pencil next to the microphone or tap the microphone itself) • Use a microphone as this prevents perceptions of being domineering
Introduce Chair and Co-Chair	• If a Government representative is present (s)he *must* speak first and hand-over to the Cluster Coordinator only if (s)he wants.
Nominate Meeting Note taker	• Normally the chair but can be a rotated NGO volunteer (Tip: the one whose mobile phone goes off, takes notes at the next meeting)
Identify any Donor representatives or Press in the room	• Do *not* ask everyone to introduce themselves; only those who are attending for the first time. • Partners should be encouraged instead to fill in the 'Agency Profile' form (see template) and submit either electronically or at the next meeting. • If Press is present, inform the room that everything that follows is "off the record" and subject to 'Chatham House Rules' i.e the affiliation of the speaker is not mentioned unless expressly requested. Speakers should still mention their name, function, and agency when intervening though.
Mention any points of 'housekeeping'	• Outline how the meeting will be conducted and ask anyone who doesn't like the approach to come up and recommend improvements afterwards. • Run through administrative points of relevance to the meeting (e.g coffee afterwards, meeting will last 90 mins; mobile

	phones off) and print these on the agenda and/or project them on a screen as people gather • [Tip: Suggest that anyone whose phone goes off automatically volunteers to take the next set of meeting notes …. It's amazing how everyone scrambles to mute their phone !]
Outline expected outcomes of the meeting	• Even in the first days of crisis response, meetings have definite themes
Ask if the agenda needs amending	• Normally any matters arising can be handled under 'Any Other Business'. • Accept minor changes if there is consensus. • Large items will be included in the next agenda. • The agenda should become standard after the first 'chaos' phase has passed (see example)
Manage the agenda (see notes for Facilitators, below)	• Do not run through previous meeting notes at this stage. [Tip: Either put something simple as the first item, or brief an NGO to raise a particular issue before the meeting starts]
Update partners on action points arising from the meeting notes of the previous meeting that have not been covered during the meeting	• Meeting Notes are action-oriented (see example)
Provide simultaneous translation services	• See preparation section above

AFTER MEETING	
Action	**Comments**
Circulate and meet representatives of larger NGOs	• Arrange to visit three per week, either in the field or in their office. Ask if any improvements could be made to how the meeting was conducted.
Ensure Donors know that you are available to (brief) them at any time	
Collect attendance sheets	• Ensure attendance is tracked in graphic (numerical) form according to type of participant (Donor, Large/Small INGO, NNGO, Other Clusters, Government, Academic Institution); Update Cluster Partners list.
Download latest data onto NGO Flash-drives	• As requested by NGOs
Circulate meeting notes within 24 hrs	• These are meeting notes, not minutes. As such, they capture key issues discussed and actions/responsibilities/deadlines delegated. Principal concerns are captured in the SitRep; Post to Cluster / HIC website

Facilitating a meeting with over 50 NGOs present is likened to "herding cats". Being seen to be impartial, independent, a good listener, and someone who is not afraid to ask advice goes a long way to engendering the 'trust' so vital to being perceived as an 'honest broker'. Try these:

- Start with a statement that sets the tone and style of the meeting (avoid humour, though, as this is so often mis-interpreted in multi-cultural settings, especially where people are already stressed)
- Avoid talking too much and getting personally involved in discussions
- Listen actively (i.e be aware of body language)
- Stick to the agenda and keep discussions focused on key issues (i.e stop digressions – interrupt if necessary). However, allow flexibility within agenda items for participants to express and develop closely-related issues and concerns (but watch the clock)
- Encourage wide participation. Ask for information and opinions, especially from smaller NGOs and Donors. Ask open-ended questions.
- Don't be defensive and don't take comments personally
- Clarify and elaborate when requested or when needed
- Test continually for consensus ("Do you all agree ?")
- Summarize, re-formulate and record key points. Since this is easier said than done when chairing the meeting, arrange for a volunteer to record salient points as they arise; this helps the group stay focused, avoids repetition, and helps reach consensus
- Obtain agreement from those present on specific proposals and allocate responsibilities there and then (it helps to write the proposal on a Flip-chart)

- Anticipate problems and prevent or mitigate them by defusing clashes and being seen to deal calmly with difficult participants

♦ Rationalise meetings and limit the proliferation of sub-groups unless there is a clear need for them.
♦ Emphasise strategic issues and action-oriented decision-making rather than information-sharing.
♦ Ensure speech is simultaneously translated
♦ Know who is attending (and who isn't)
♦ Summarise action points at the end
♦ Set strict time limits per agenda item (90 mins max)
♦ Use conference calls instead of meetings.
♦ Ensure that accurate *draft* meeting notes are circulated within 24 hrs.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Humanitarian Coordinator (who may or may not also be the Resident Coordinator) is accountable for the following. If at any time, you think he or she is failing to discharge these responsibilities, you should raise the issue with the head of the respective Cluster Lead Agency. Should nothing happen, inform the OCHA regional representative.

- Ensuring common service provision
- Enabling inter-sectoral cooperation
- Facilitating integration of cross-cutting issues
- Provision of contextual socio-economic, political, inter-sectoral, and hazard risk analyses
- Facilitation of joint needs assessments
- Coherence of information management (including establishment of denominator baselines)
- Consistent geo-physical mapping (including administrative boundaries)
- Advising on joint survey design and coordinating the logistics of implementation
- Overseeing the monitoring of performance management
- Advocating on operational issues of common interest to all Clusters
- Providing advice on internal and external governance structures
- Mobilizing financial resources (using CERF, Flash Appeal, CAP, CHAP)
- Joint contingency planning
- Inter-Cluster strategy formulation
- Policy development
- Liaising with military and private security actors
- Reporting
- Identifying key partners and analysing stakeholder capacities
- Coherent use of IT applications and web platforms for information-sharing
- Ensuring Cluster Lead Agencies commit to 'provider of last resort' conditions
- Clusters disengage/merge/phase down only once stated humanitarian objectives have been met and appropriate handover mechanisms are in place

REPORTING

Cluster Coordinators should be able to brief the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and all other stakeholders at a moment's notice verbally and in writing (SitRep) on:
- The Cluster's goal
- Progress towards meeting the Cluster's objectives
- Main achievements
- Main gaps and constraints to achievement of Cluster objectives (funding and operational)
- Future intentions
- Inter-Cluster issues
- Advocacy needs

FUND MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Management of pooled funds requires transparent decision-making by an independent committee established within each Cluster (based on prioritized funding criteria previously agreed by all Clusters), while the contractual process is ideally administered by a dedicated central secretariat (managed by OCHA) within the RC-HC's office.

Two months into the Pakistan Earthquake response in 2005, USD 31 million of un-earmarked funding was made available to the UN System by various donors. A pooled fund was consequently established, with UNDP as the designated fund-holder. The Emergency Shelter Cluster, with IOM as the Cluster Lead Agency, was initially allocated USD 6.1 million. The Cluster's 'Strategic Advisory Group' (SAG) agreed its own funding criteria (see below) on behalf of the Cluster and called for concept papers based on these criteria. A 'Bids Committee' was then established from among the Cluster membership at the next (plenary) coordination meeting using a sophisticated 'random' methodology involving 'volunteering' agencies drawing bits of marked paper out of a hat. Terms of Reference for this Bids Committee, also drawn up by the SAG, were ratified at the same time.

Independent and transparent allocative decision-making by Clusters via a process facilitated by the Cluster Coordinator as 'honest broker' empowers Clusters through:
  ➢ Minimising donor opportunities to "cherry-pick" projects and programmes that conform to their own particular preferences
  ➢ Filling 'difficult' gaps in response that are either disproportionately costly in terms of human resources required or accessibility.
  ➢ Reducing allegations that 'parent' (usually UN) Cluster Lead Agencies were 'skewing' allocation decisions.

Administration of fund disbursement would be more cost-efficient if centrally managed by a dedicated secretariat within the RC-HC's office lead by OCHA (as in Sudan and DRC). This would result in:
  ➢ Improved inter-sectoral integration and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues
  ➢ Reduction in transaction costs through economies of scale due to having only one 'secretariat' staff, and the less than 7% for 'operational support costs' that OCHA would charge (there being a sliding scale which decreases the percentage levied for larger sums).
  ➢ Improved cash-flow for implementing agencies
  ➢ Faster response
  ➢ Streamlined accountability

Funding criteria and prioritization should be agreed by all Clusters together prior to individual Cluster decision-making, and could include:
  ➢ Preference will be given to those who participate in, and are recognised by, established national and international coordination forums
  ➢ Conformity with the humanitarian response strategy (as outlined in the Flash Appeal/CAP)
  ➢ Conformity with Cluster strategic priorities (as outlined in the 'Strategic Operational Framework')
  ➢ Projects should meet real and defined needs based, to the extent possible, on recent comprehensive assessment of the situation on the ground
  ➢ Prioritization given to as yet un-reached marginalized and/or vulnerable groups in inaccessible places
  ➢ Tangible impact within the project timeframe (i.e that stands alone from any longer term benefits) should be demonstrable
  ➢ Demonstrate awareness of, and endeavour to adhere to, relevant best practice and minimum standards (Sphere, etc) as outlined in the Emergency Shelter Cluster's agreed technical guidelines
  ➢ Presence in-country prior to disaster onset
  ➢ Working through, or in coordination with, key local counterparts is preferred
  ➢ Relevant experience in the sector
  ➢ Implementing capacity (in addition to resources already committed), including technical expertise available
  ➢ Appropriate management structure

EARLY RECOVERY
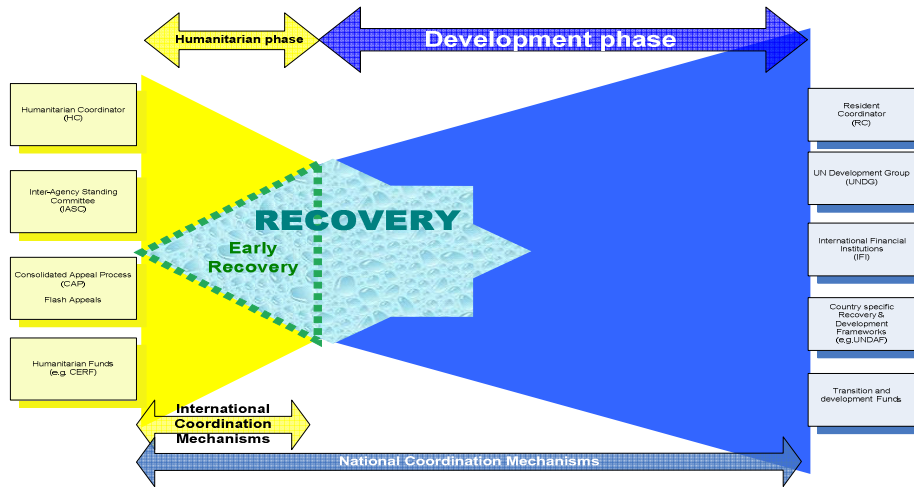
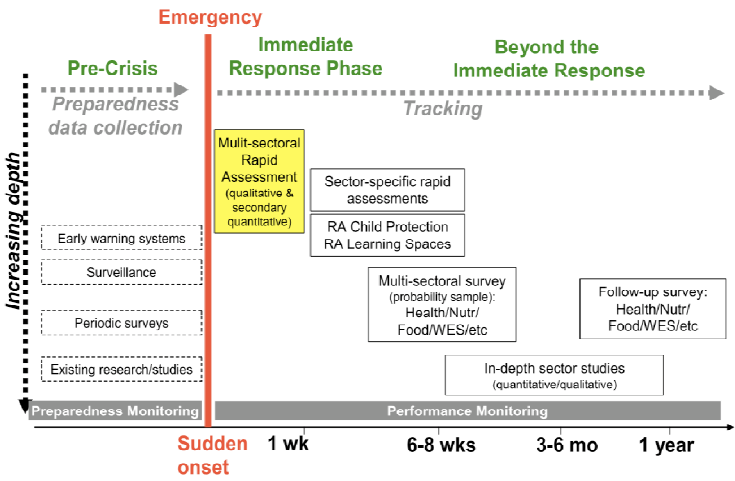Early recovery occurs in parallel with humanitarian activities, but its objectives, mechanisms and expertise are different. Early recovery aims to:

♦ augment on-going humanitarian assistance operations;
♦ support spontaneous recovery initiatives by affected communities;
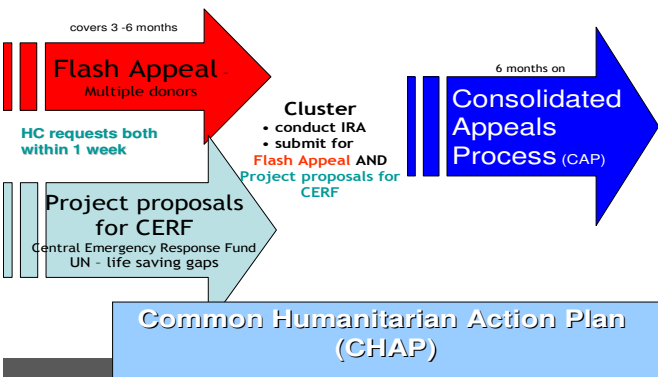♦ establish the foundations of longer-term recovery.

UNDP is accountable to the HC/RC to provide expertise and support in early recovery coordination, strategic planning, monitoring, preparedness, and advocacy. However, early recovery is a multi-dimensional process as well as a cross-cutting issue and must be mainstreamed into the work of all Clusters. It is strongly recommended, therefore, to establish an Early Recovery network, rather than creating a separate, independent Cluster for early recovery. To support the HC/RC,

UNDP deploys Early Recovery Advisors/Coordinators to the HC/RC's office to facilitate the Early Recovery Network. An overall early recovery plan or strategy is developed by the HC/RC, with the support of the Early Recovery Advisor/Coordinator. Under this umbrella strategy, designated early recovery focal points in each cluster work with the coordinator of the Early Recovery Network towards the integration, mainstreaming and coordination of early recovery issues within their specific areas of work. The responsibility to ensure that this happens lies with each country-level cluster or sector lead.

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS …

APPEALS …

covers 3 -6 months

Flash Appeal - Multiple donors

HC requests both within 1 week

Project proposals for CERF
Central Emergency Response Fund
UN – life saving gaps

Cluster
• conduct IRA
• submit for
Flash Appeal AND
Project proposals for
CERF

6 months on

Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP)

Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)

TYPICAL ORGANISATION OF A CLA