

Cluster coordination

When emergencies occur coordination is essential to reduce gaps and overlaps in the assistance delivered by humanitarian organisations.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters are formally activated when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained in their ability to respond to identified needs in line with humanitarian principles.

The cluster approach is not the only coordination solution and may coexist with other forms of national or international coordination. The scale of national level coordination arrangements should be tailored to each operational context.

Cluster approach aims to strengthen:

- transparency
- accountability
- predictability
- engagement with national authorities
- inclusion of affected communities
- advocacy
- joint planning

Clusters create partnerships between international humanitarian actors, national and local authorities and civil society.

Clusters include:

Camp Coordination and Management
 Early Recovery
 Education
 Emergency Telecommunications
 Food Security
 Health
 Logistics
 Nutrition
 Protection
 Shelter
 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Not all clusters will be activated every time.

What are clusters?

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action. They are designated by the IASC, have clear responsibilities for coordination and can operate at different levels:

Sub-national level

- critical in remote or large areas; better access to local knowledge and work alongside local government and organisations with shared leadership between national authorities, NGOs and UN agencies.

National level

- each activated cluster is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) through the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) as well as to national authorities and affected population: may co-lead with government and NGOs.

Global level

- designated CLAs are accountable to OCHA's Emergency Relief Coordinator and aim to improve preparedness and response capacity, standardise tools and methodologies, and share best practice.

Cluster functions at country-level

1. **Support service delivery** – driven by Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities, eliminating duplication.
2. **Inform strategic decision-making of HC/Humanitarian Country Team** – preparing needs assessment and gap analysis to inform priorities, identify and find solutions for gaps, obstacles, duplications and cross-cutting issues.
3. **Plan and implement strategies** – develop sectoral plans to support strategic priorities, apply standards and guidelines and clarify funding priorities.
4. **Monitor and Evaluate** – monitor and report on activities and needs, measure progress, recommend corrective action.
5. **Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning** – where high risk of recurring or new disaster, and where capacity exists.
6. **Support robust advocacy** – identify concerns, contribute key messages to HC/HCT, undertake advocacy on behalf of cluster and affected population.

Minimum commitment for participation in clusters

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - commitment to Principles of Partnership* - readiness to participate and be accountable - understand duties & responsibilities - capacity to contribute to cluster's strategic response plan and activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active participation in cluster - consistent engagement of a senior staff - commitment to work cooperatively - willingness to take on leadership role - contribute to advocacy and messaging - effective communication |
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**See 'Developing Partnerships' page*

Additional resources on All In Diary website

Reference Module for Cluster Coordination, IASC 2015
 Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring © UNOCHA 2015
 Working together in the field for effective humanitarian response – ALNAP Working paper ©ALNAP/ODI 2015

Web links for further information

Clusters – <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info>
 IASC <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda>
 OCHA <https://www.unocha.org/legacy/what-we-do/coordination-tools/cluster-coordination>