

**Appendix C: Background Documents**

Background Document 1

**CLUSTER APPROACH EVALUATION: PHASE TWO**

*Background Paper for Cluster II Evaluation Steering Group Meeting*

**November 18, 2008**

**Geneva**

This briefing paper is intended as a starting point for the launch of the second phase of the Cluster Approach Evaluation. It raises questions that will be discussed at the kick-off meeting with the Cluster 2 Steering Group on November 18 and throughout the development of the Cluster 2 Evaluation Framework. The issues and items raised are not final and will be reviewed in more depth at this meeting.

## **1. PHASE ONE: PROCESS ASSESSMENT**

The first Cluster Approach Evaluation has been finalized and widely circulated throughout the humanitarian community<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of the first phase of the evaluation was to “provide evidence of major achievements and shortcoming of the [cluster] approach, and to assess concrete changes in operational response resulting from its application.”<sup>2</sup> The evaluation team used a number of process indicators to measure the overall performance of the cluster approach against its functional and operational objectives both at the global and country levels.

The first evaluation found that the cluster approach generally improved how sectors are functioning and delivering aid. Although progress remains uneven across some countries and clusters, the evaluation identified a number of process improvements, including greater use of partnerships and more accountability.

## **2. PHASE TWO: IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

While improved systems typically lead to better humanitarian outcomes, the second phase aims to explicitly evaluate the cluster approach in terms of its final impact on the humanitarian response. This stage is important as from the outset the IASC declared that “the success of the cluster approach will be judged in terms of the impact it has on improving the humanitarian response to those affected by crises.”<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 Research Question(s)

Possible main research questions for Phase two of the evaluation are as follows:

- Since the implementation of the cluster approach, are there now better systems and coordination mechanisms in place which have led to improved performance on the ground?

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Cluster Approach Evaluation Final Draft*. November, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Cluster Approach Evaluation Final Draft*. November, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response. 24 November 2006.

- Using proxy indicators from the first question, has the application of the cluster approach resulted in more beneficiaries being reached, more quickly, with better quality services, resulting in improved overall humanitarian conditions?

In answering these questions, the evaluation could consider the cluster approach from the following perspectives:

- Overall cluster outcomes (intended and unintended) associated with the application of the overall approach (i.e. inter cluster coordination, collaboration with national governments, leadership and partnership issues, linkages to the Global Humanitarian Platform).
- Specific outcomes (intended and unintended) associated with individual clusters
- Impact that global cluster level has made towards improving work at the national level
- Cross cutting themes (HIV/AIDS, Environment, Gender)
- Transition from humanitarian action to early recovery

These themes should be narrowed and input from the Steering Group will be necessary to define the parameters of the Phase 2 findings and the areas of investigation that will be most useful to them.

## 2.2 Indicators

Over the next two weeks, a relevant set of indicators will be identified to evaluate overall outcomes. This process will draw on the performance objectives that were initially envisaged when the cluster approach was designed and applied. Indicators could include<sup>4</sup>:

- Effectiveness: number of beneficiaries accessed by aid actors, overall response rates, percentage of targets met
- Efficiency: geographical presence of humanitarian actors, number of objectives met within established timeframes, number of new approaches used to address challenges within the emergency context

The desk review will also explore other relevant outcome-oriented performance frameworks used by donor governments and humanitarian agencies to assess good practice.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Note that this list is illustrative and not final. Additions and changes will be made throughout the consultation process.

<sup>5</sup> These include: Save the Children UK's Global Impact Monitoring Framework, Action Aid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS), OECD/DAC Criteria, ICRC Planning for Results,

In addition, since there are vast differences across each sector, a few (2-3) targeted indicators for each cluster will be identified. Any existing outcome/impact indicators by which clusters have been measuring program performance will be useful.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3 Methodology

Consultation with steering group members and global clusters will help determine the most appropriate methodologies. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is recommended but will be ultimately guided by the agreed upon indicators. It will also be important to include beneficiaries in the evaluative process.

## **3. CHALLENGES TO THE PHASE II EVALUATION**

Before developing a framework for the evaluation, it is important to acknowledge some fundamental challenges.

### 3.1 Causality

It may be difficult to attribute changes in humanitarian outcomes to the cluster approach. Any number of economic, political or social factors, (including the security situation, access to humanitarian space, the influence of other humanitarian efforts, the political context and the coping mechanisms of local communities) can significantly impact targeted populations and in fact be even more important in shaping humanitarian outcomes. Controlling for these factors in a systematic way across 6 countries will be a significant challenge.

### 3.2 Lack of underlying logical evaluative framework

Quality impact assessment requires that simple, realistic, and measurable objectives are established at the beginning of an intervention. It is unclear whether the cluster system developed objectives at the outset with any more specificity than improving the delivery of humanitarian aid. What were the specific intended outcomes of the cluster approach? What impacts were intended to be achieved? These questions will need to be answered before attempting to evaluate the process.

### 3.3 Lack of Control Group

Evaluating the impact of an intervention requires comparing it to what the outcome would have been in the absence of the intervention. Since in many cases there will be no

---

Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART), Participatory Impact Assessment.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the Global Appeal Strategic Framework 2007 lists these for each sector.

control group, we need to establish a realistic idea of how beneficiaries would have fared had the intervention not occurred.<sup>7</sup>

One way to replicate a control group is by comparing a situation in which the cluster approach was initiated to an analogous context in which the cluster approach was not applied – for example, comparing the refugee setting in Chad where the cluster approach has been applied to the IDP situation in Darfur, where the cluster approach has yet to be rolled out.

Another possible approach would be to compare cluster approach outcomes to outcomes from similar humanitarian responses that pre-date the cluster approach, though establishing causality becomes increasingly challenging under these circumstances.

### 3.4 Lack of Baseline

It is difficult to measure the impact of a humanitarian program without knowing how conditions were prior to the intervention. While some clusters and country teams may have baseline information which can be used in the evaluation, it is likely that many do not. Baseline information can be pieced together (ex-post) by conducting interviews with beneficiaries and aid workers and by examining project documents and records, including reviews, situation analyses, and case study reports. Again though, this form of measurement is not ideal.

Countries could be selected where baseline data was collected and this could be used in measuring the outcomes. Alternatively, the Phase 2 evaluation could be envisioned as longer process whereby baseline data is collected at this stage and the evaluation team revisits the same countries to determine any changes after a given period of time.

## **4. POINTS OF CLARIFICATION**

### 4.1 Scope of Phase Two

According to the Cluster Evaluation Phase II Status Report, the purpose of this next phase of the assessment is to:

- Assess the short- and medium-term effects of the joint humanitarian response at country level with particular attention to the effects of the use of the cluster approach
- Assess the extent to which operational objectives of the cluster approach were achieved

---

<sup>7</sup>Good Practices in Evaluating Psychosocial Programming, Save the Children UK

Since evaluating outcomes will undoubtedly overlap with the process evaluation, it is important at the outset that the Steering Group define more clearly the scope of this evaluation. The second bullet listed in the Status Report potentially repeats the aim of the first evaluation and should be further clarified. Although the second phase will examine whether operational objectives have led to positive (or negative) impacts and outcomes, the first phase has already assessed the operational achievements of the cluster approach.

#### 4.2 Defining Impact and Outcome

It is also important to define what is meant by impact and outcome. A typical definition refers to the extent to which a project or program has caused significant changes in the lives of beneficiaries. We need to be clear that we are limiting the scope to evaluating impacts and outcomes at the beneficiary level.

#### 4.3 Duration of Evaluation

It is important that the Steering Group keep in mind what can be realistically achieved given the time and resource constraints of the evaluation.

### **5. PROCESS**

Methodology and deliverables are outlined below. Table 1 summarizes this information.

#### Stage 1: Desk Review and Framework Outline Development

These initial weeks will be spent conducting a desk review of previous evaluations. A framework outline – which will form the basis of the final evaluation framework – will be developed based on this research.

During these initial weeks, the consultant will also prepare a cluster consultation methodology. This will include interview and focus group guides, presentations, and any quantitative information gathering for the weeks of consultation with these stakeholders. Please see attached data collection methods.

#### Stage 2 (Current Stage): Consultation with CE2StG and Cluster Leads

The consultant will travel to Geneva to conduct meetings with all stakeholders including the CE2StG Chair, the CE2StG and the cluster leads. OCHA will assist in arranging these meetings. Discussions will also be held with previous evaluators of the cluster approach

and other relevant stakeholders such as presenters at the Global Cluster –Donor Meeting.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of this phase, a brief summary report on the outcomes of the meetings with the cluster leads will be drafted and shared with the CE2StG to apprise them of the direction of the project and ensure their involvement. In addition, a validation workshop will be held to present the findings and get further feedback on the direction of the evaluation framework.

### Stage 3: Cluster 2 Evaluation Framework Development

Using the information gathered in the Stages1+2 of the project, the consultant will design a detailed and comprehensive evaluation framework. This framework will include the following:

- Expected results for the humanitarian response and expected contributions by clusters at country level
- List of key issues to be covered, expressed as key questions to be asked by the evaluation
- A concise list of indicators and benchmarks against which the Cluster 2 evaluation shall measure outcomes at the country level
- A list of topics that need to be included in generic ToR for the country-level evaluations, as well as for a global level analysis of country level evaluations to assess the overall effectiveness of Clusters in the context of humanitarian reform

Again, to ensure that the final products meet the client’s standards and expectations, regular communication with the CE2StG will occur throughout this phase. The consultant will also conduct a peer review of the developed framework with other experts to ensure best practice.

### 5.1 Deliverables

Along with the complete evaluation framework as outlined in Phase 2 above, the consultant will deliver a Power Point presentation to the CE2StG, relevant cluster leads and other important stakeholders. If necessary, the consultant would be open to conducting a workshop and explaining the evaluation framework and the recommended methodological approaches.

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, the “Global Cluster Donor Meeting Summary record and Co-Chairs Conclusions” cites one of the conclusions from Mark Cutts’ (OCHA) presentation as “operational actors are starting to see real benefits from the partnerships generated by the clusters.” An important question to determine impact would be what kind of benefits are being seen?

**TABLE 1: CLUSTER II EVALUATION FRAMEWORK - METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW**

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	DELIVERABLES
Phase 1: Weeks 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk Review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cluster consultation methodology</li> <li>• Framework outline created to be shared and finalized with CE2StG Chair and presented to the CE2StG for feedback</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Weeks 3-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with Relevant Stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary report on cluster lead consultation</li> <li>• Validation workshop with CE2StG (TBD if necessary)</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Weeks 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design of Evaluation Framework and TOR</li> <li>• Peer Review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed Evaluation Framework including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expected results for humanitarian response and expected contributions by clusters at country level</li> <li>- Key questions to be asked by the evaluation</li> <li>- List of indicators and benchmarks against which the Cluster 2 evaluation shall measure outcomes at the country level</li> <li>- List of topics to be included in generic ToR for the country-level evaluations, as well as for a global level analysis of country level evaluations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Topics to be included in the TOR for the Cluster 2 Evaluation</li> <li>• Workshop to review evaluation framework and determine next steps (TBD if necessary)</li> </ul>

Background Document 2  
Developing Indicators/Benchmarks for Cluster 2 Evaluation

### **1. Introduction**

This phase of the evaluation attempts to assess the effects of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular focus on the cluster approach.

The researchers are trying to best determine what impact this system has had on humanitarian programming and whether or not there has been added value in using this approach. The evaluation will try to measure these things from an overall perspective, and also to what extent each cluster's performance has led to changes (either positive or negative) in humanitarian delivery. Please keep in mind that this evaluation can not be an in-depth analysis of each cluster but is meant to provide evidence for any improved or hindered humanitarian performance due to the cluster approach.

### **2. Potential Limitations**

The evaluators recognize some major limitations to this evaluation, namely the difficulty in determining causality, the potential premature stage at which this evaluation is coming about to measure outcome, and the lack of baseline data for which to compare outcomes. However, it still may be possible to point to changes that have taken place in the delivery of humanitarian aid due to the application of this approach.

### **3. Cluster Performance Indicators**

This is an opportunity for each cluster to define what the criteria should be to measure its performance. The researchers are looking for 2-3 specific indicators which can potentially demonstrate areas where there have been outcomes at the country level. The specific countries have yet to be determined by the Cluster 2 Evaluation Steering Group but they are looking to evaluate operations in 6 countries with geographical spread and at various stages of cluster implementation roll-out.

Pre-existing performance matrices and work plans will be useful and are encouraged to be applied. Indicators should be specific and measurable. Questions to consider when determining indicators are:

- What analysis would be most useful for your cluster?
- Is there evidence of effectiveness of the use of the cluster approach? I.e. Has the application of this approach led to any differences in programming or are things functioning as they were?
- What is currently used to determine how a cluster is performing? What criteria are used to conclude that a cluster is performing well or not well?
- Are there any areas where baseline information has already been collected and can be applied to this evaluation?

These will be discussed during the consultations with individual clusters, and any data or information to share at those meetings is welcome.