



**PHASE TWO CLUSTER EVALUATION
FRAMEWORK**

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I. BACKGROUND

In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals requested an evaluation of the cluster approach after two years. The evaluation was divided into two phases, the first focusing on process indicators – the achievements and limitations of the cluster approach and lessons learned related to its roll-out. This phase was finalized in 2007 and has been widely circulated throughout the humanitarian community¹.

While improved systems typically lead to better humanitarian outcomes, the second phase aims to explicitly evaluate the cluster approach on the results it has had on improving the humanitarian response. This paper is the final iteration of the Phase 2 Cluster Evaluation (“the evaluation”) framework. The Steering Committee and cluster members have had the opportunity to provide feedback on the first draft (submitted December 16, 2008). Comments were either adopted or rejected based on appropriateness, feasibility and consistency with direction given by other stakeholders. The attached ‘Comments Matrix’ outlines comments from the various stakeholders and the action taken in response.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF PHASE II FRAMEWORK

2.1 Steering Committee

A steering committee comprised of stakeholders from the UN, donors, and NGOs has guided the development of the evaluation. The committee features professionals with evaluation experience and with expertise on the cluster approach and its rollout. The steering committee has made all decisions regarding the direction and purpose of the evaluation, and ultimate conclusions on country selection, scope and methodology lie with them.

The consultant met with the steering committee on 18 November 2008 to finalize the direction and scope of the evaluation and resolve any outstanding issues before consulting with the individual clusters.

2.2 Cluster Consultation

Between 13 November and 10 December 2008, the consultant met with each of the 11 clusters, focal people for the cross cutting issues and various stakeholders in Geneva, New York City and Rome (via teleconference). The purpose of the meetings was threefold:

- i) to explain the purpose and objectives of the evaluation
- ii) to discuss issues particular to each cluster that should be incorporated into the evaluation

¹ See *Cluster Approach Evaluation Final Draft*. November, 2007.

- iii) to solicit input and feedback on the design of the framework, with a specific focus on indicators and benchmarks that would be most relevant to each cluster

All clusters and stakeholders were provided with the background documents to help guide discussions.²

2.3 Document Review

The cluster approach has undergone a number of previous evaluations and reviews. In addition to the information provided by each cluster, these reviews were referenced for more background information. See Appendix B for the complete list of documents referenced.

III. PHASE 2 EVALUATION: OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

3.1 Scope and Purpose

This exercise will not only attempt to enhance country level operations by providing them with actionable recommendations, but will also inform the wider humanitarian community (including the IASC, donors, global cluster teams) and bring the reality in the field back to decision makers. The evaluation can also serve as a baseline for future evaluation exercises which examine effects and/or impacts of the cluster approach.

As was agreed by the Steering Committee, the overall objectives of the evaluation are to³:

- Assess the main outcomes⁴ of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular reference to the role of the cluster approach and other components of the humanitarian reform process
- Assess the overall operational effectiveness⁵ of the cluster approach (including the role of the Global Clusters) in facilitating and supporting the coordinated joint humanitarian response at country level through an analysis of common country-level findings

As stated in the *Revised Note on a proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II*, “it is recognized that it will not be feasible to conduct a comprehensive assessment of impact (understood as variation of beneficiaries' conditions as a direct consequence of the cluster approach / humanitarian reform). In the context of 'operational effectiveness' the evaluation will nonetheless aim to identify whether and if so, how, the joint humanitarian response delivered through the cluster approach is contributing positively to the dignity and well-being of beneficiary populations and responding to their needs.”

² See Appendix C for copies of the background documents.

³ Taken from Cluster Evaluation Phase II Status Report: 16 October 2008.

⁴ Outcome understood as likely or achieved short term and medium term effects of the response's outputs

⁵ Effectiveness being the extent to which operational objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance

For the complete scope and purpose of the evaluation, as iterated by the Steering Group, please see Appendix D for the most recent *Revised Note on a proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II*.

This evaluation will also serve as the baseline for future evaluations of cluster effectiveness, and therefore the findings should be formulated with this in mind.

3.2 Logic Model: A Results Hierarchy for the Cluster Approach

To measure change, the evaluators must first determine what the intended outcomes of the intervention were at the outset. The overall aim of the cluster approach as defined by the IASC is to:

“strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity. It is about achieving more strategic responses and better prioritization of available resources by clarifying the division of labour among organizations, better defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations within the sectors, and providing the Humanitarian Coordinator with both a first point of call and a provider of last resort in all the key sectors or areas of activity. 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.”⁶

A number of Guidance Notes from the IASC define cluster roles and responsibilities, which have helped guide the development of the outcome/performance indicators used here. However, a concrete set of intended objectives, whether operational or long-term, was not explicitly articulated at the outset of the cluster approach, despite a clear recommendation in the *Humanitarian Response Review* to do so.⁷ Although this recommendation was adopted, benchmarks or indicators to measure performance and actions, both for the wider humanitarian community and for clusters, still does not exist.

Diagram 1 below outlines the logical framework for the cluster approach and conveys the linkages on the results chain (between process – output – outcome to short term effects and longer term impacts). This evaluation will be an opportunity to test these proposed linkages between processes and ultimate impacts. As mentioned, while it will be too early to determine long term impacts, outcomes and perhaps shorter term effects (the sections marked on Diagram 1 as “operational effectiveness”) and the processes that have led to these will be examined for individual clusters. As mentioned above, this evaluation can serve as a baseline to measure the linkages and extent to which they have been achieved at this point.

3.3 Definitions in the Logic Model

The indicators for each of these categories are outlined in Section IV below, but the following gives an overview and definitions of each level of the results hierarchy.

⁶ IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, 24 November 2006.

⁷ The Humanitarian Response Review states: “the use of benchmarks and indicators should be applied in a more systematic way by the humanitarian organizations, building on existing standards and methodologies.”

Processes/Inputs:

Initial inputs and processes are injected into the system when the cluster approach is activated at country level. These inputs include support from the global cluster (standby capacity, tools and resource mobilization) and preparedness activities. Since the Phase I evaluation assessed preparedness, this dimension need not be explicitly repeated although some indicators point to this. Indicators to measure the impact of global support on work at the country level will be examined.

Process/Output:

Predictable leadership, partnership/cohesiveness, and accountability represent the main processes/outputs at country level that make up effective cluster functioning. Indicators of these processes/outputs are important because implementation of the cluster model has varied considerably across countries and clusters. The researchers must determine whether or not the fundamental processes of the cluster approach have been applied before attempting to understand their outcomes or effects. For example, to analyze the outcome of more predictable leadership in a certain sector, one must first assume that that the cluster approach did in fact increase predictability in leadership. Where cluster leads have fulfilled these obligations (i.e. performed the process-oriented tasks such as facilitating TORs for cluster members, setting up effective communications and information management systems, conducting strategic meetings and planning) outcomes will be measurable. This evaluation should therefore be helpful in documenting not only the extent to which the approach has been rolled out at the field level (including facilitating and limiting factors for roll-out) but also how these processes have linked to better outcomes.

Outcome/Effect:

The ultimate purpose of the cluster approach was not better coordination as an end in itself, but to improve the humanitarian response. The focus of the evaluation should therefore remain on outcomes and any short term effects that are possible to glean at country level. Greater gap filling and better coverage (both geographic and thematic) were repeatedly highlighted by cluster members as priority outcomes of improved coordination and leadership. In addition, the feedback also emphasized including local stakeholders and ensuring their participation and ownership of the process as a critical outcome.

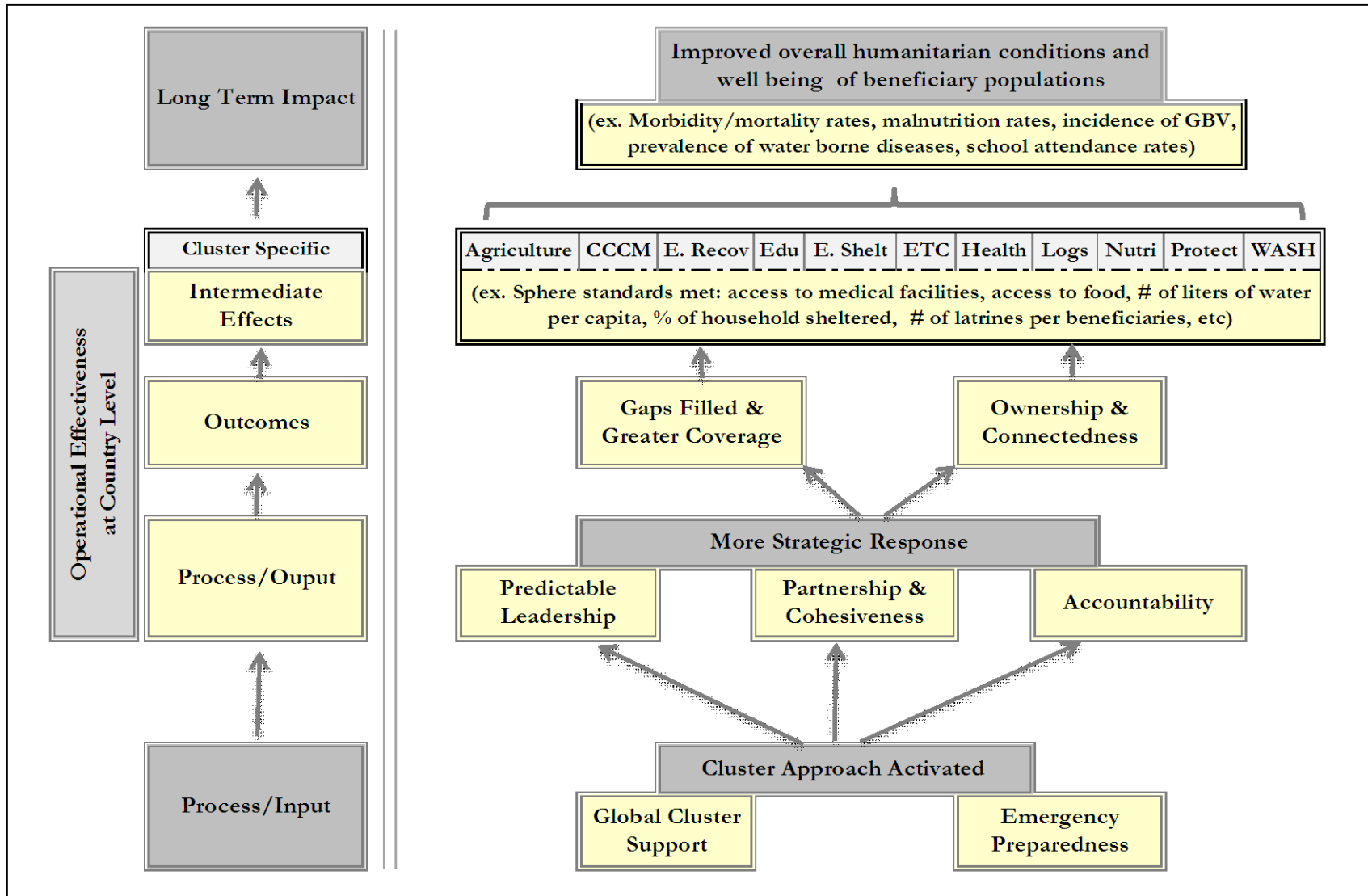
Intermediate Term Effects:

These effects should be examined for each individual cluster at country level. Further consultation with each cluster in country will help identify these specific effects. A useful start will be the Sphere standards or other locally agreed standards and the corresponding delivery for each cluster. However, since contextual differences for each country should be considered, the evaluation team will have to identify indicators that apply in each setting.

Long Term Impacts:

The Steering Committee and cluster members agree that measuring long term impact of the cluster approach at beneficiary level is not feasible since detecting or measuring impact will be unattainable at this stage. Others recognize that the various limitations will make an impact assessment extremely challenging. For this evaluation, measuring the processes, outcomes and effects will provide evidence for the operational effectiveness of the cluster approach. A method to begin monitoring some of the longer term impacts of the cluster approach can be initiated and evaluated at a later stage.

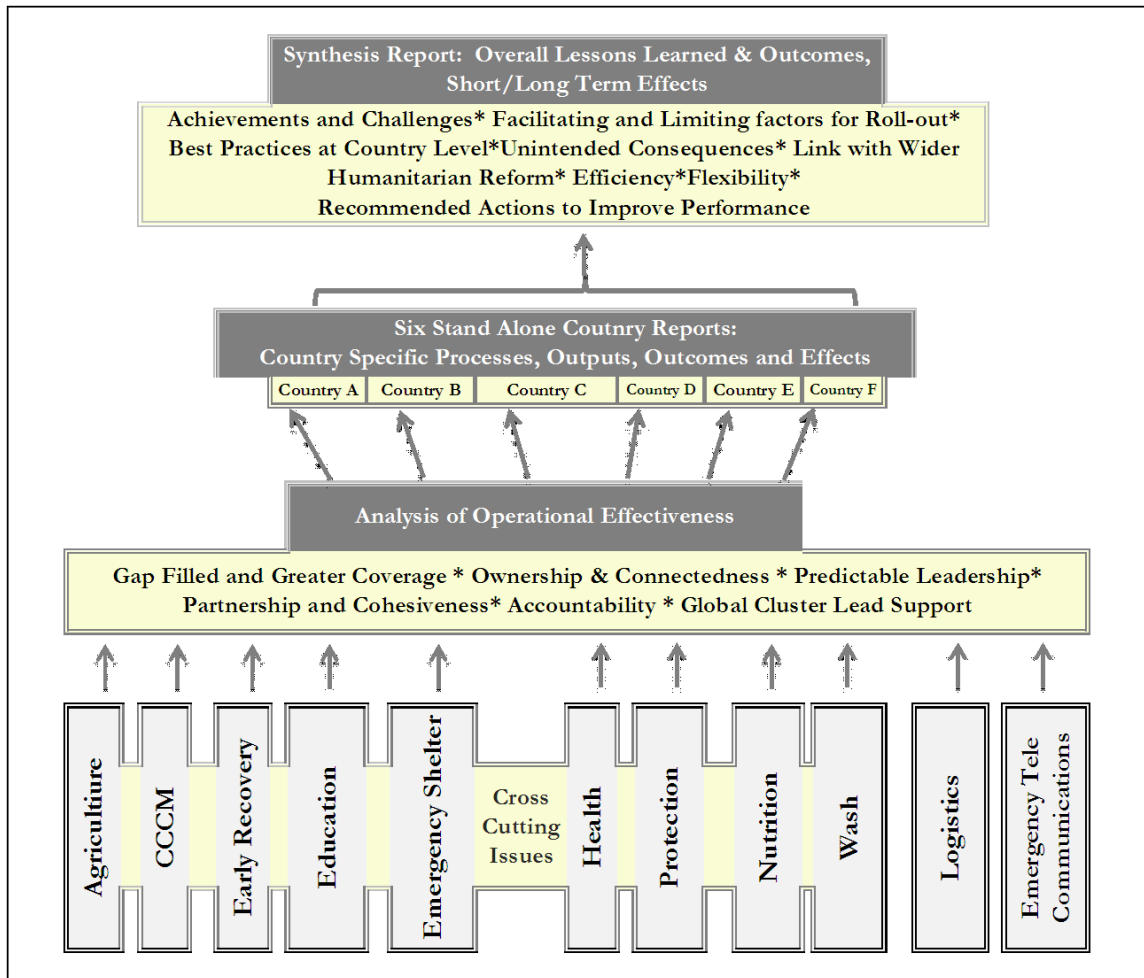
Box 1. Results Hierarchy for Cluster Approach at Country Level



IV. EVALUATION APPROACH: THREE TIERED DESIGN

The approach to conduct the evaluation is comprised of a three-tier design but must be flexible and adaptable to the multiple contexts and settings where the evaluation will take place. Each tier is directly correlated to the various stages in the results hierarchy as explained further below. The following sections provide a narrative and the indicators/questions to be used at each level of analysis. The strategy is depicted in Diagram 2 below.

Diagram 2. Phase 2 Evaluation Approach



4.1 Generic Indicators: Operational Effectiveness of the Cluster Approach

The bulk of the evaluation will focus on the main intended outcomes and fundamental principles of the cluster approach as articulated by the IASC. Data sources for this information will come mainly from interviews with stakeholders and key informants (including donors and beneficiaries), but also documents produced at the country level such as: workplans, sitreps assessments, information sharing frameworks, mapping tools (updated 3W analysis) records of meetings, financial data, appeal submissions (CAP, CHAP, Flash, CERF), direct observation of programs. Supporting documents at

the global level will also be analyzed, especially trainings, tools/standards/guidelines used at field level.

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

This level analysis deals mainly with outputs and outcomes from the logical framework. The categories directly correlate to those mapped out in the results framework. Those indicators in **bold** represent the prioritized indicators; the others should certainly be considered but are not as critical. The indicators are broken down into two types: P/O, or process/output and E/O, or effect/outcome).

OUTCOME 1: GAPS FILLED AND GREATER COVERAGE

“Prioritize the main issues and ensure that there are no major gaps in the humanitarian response”⁸

Indicators	Type	Data Sources
Extent to which clusters have been able to clearly identify gaps within, and between, their respective sectors	P/O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of needs assessments, baseline data, workplans, information sharing frameworks, program documents, previous evaluations/assessments - Direct observation of programs (services for Logs and ETC) at field level - Interviews/focus groups with cluster members - Beneficiary interviews/ focus groups (ETC/Logs excluded)
Extent to which geographic and thematic duplications have been identified and avoided	E/O	
Geographic coverage: Percent of affected population being accessed	E/O	
Thematic coverage: Programming covering sectors that weren’t covered previously.	E/O	
Programming is better targeted to appropriate beneficiary groups previously underserved	E/O	
Assessments disaggregate data by age and sex (where appropriate), and are designed to elicit differentiated risks/needs linked to age, gender and diversity	P/O	
Level of satisfaction amongst users of ETC and logistics services that their needs have been met effectively	E/O	

⁸ Unless otherwise specified, all quotes in this section are taken from: *IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*. 26 November 2006

OUTCOME 2: OWNERSHIP AND CONNECTEDNESS

“Ensure that humanitarian responses build on local capacities; Ensure appropriate links with national and local authorities, State institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors (e.g. peacekeeping forces) and ensure appropriate coordination and information exchange with them.”

Indicator	Type	Data Sources
Extent to which cluster leads ensure the humanitarian response is consistent with and supports national and local strategies	P/O	- Review of national and local workplans/ strategies
Extent to which cluster leads have enabled the participation of government and local authorities in the identification of needs and in the formulation and implementation of the response	P/O	- Cluster Meeting minutes and attendance records - Interviews with local authorities, local NGOs
A meaningful handing over or exit strategy developed and adequate steps taken to transfer relevant technical knowledge to local partners or actors that enable them to build on or continue efforts	E/O	- Interviews/focus groups with cluster leads and member agencies
Extent to which people affected by the emergency have been provided with adequate information (language and simplicity) about the activities that affect them	E/O	- Locally developed MOUs in place and adopted by government
Extent to which response has taken place within and/or supported the development of national, institutional, and legislative frameworks for disaster risk reduction	E/O	
Extent to which beneficiaries enabled to take an active part in: -Assessing and prioritizing initial needs -Planning and decision-making on key issues -Project implementation -Monitoring the project	E/O	

PROCESS/OUTPUT 1: PREDICTABLE LEADERSHIP

“Clearly identified leads... for all the key sectors or areas of activity, with clearly defined responsibilities for these agencies in their capacities as sector leads”

Indicators	Type	Data Sources
Cluster lead agency actively carrying out its duties as outlined in the TOR (i.e. information sharing, stakeholder analysis, assessments and monitoring of programming)	P/O	- Interviews with local authorities, NGOs (both international and national)
Extent to which cluster lead agency exhibits responsibility for the work within the cluster, (not only for its own operational demands)	P/O	- Interviews/focus groups with cluster members
Where clusters are co-led at field level, the extent to which	P/O	

respective responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of TORs and MOUs between cluster members and leads - Review of information management networks - Review of monitoring mechanisms (if any) - Review of appeals: CAP, Flash, CHF, CHAP, CERF - Interviews with donors
Existence of a framework for incorporating cross cutting issues (including early recovery and protection) into cluster workplans and information management instruments and use of sex and age disaggregated data	P/O	
High quality and technical detail of information sharing frameworks which feed into the work of cluster members, other clusters, the HC/RC and the HCT and keeps track of evolving needs and evolving response	P/O	
Common understanding among the HC/RC, the cluster leads and cluster members of first port of call and provider of last resort concepts	P/O	
Extent to which Cluster leads have acted effectively as providers of last resort	E/O	
Extent to which Cluster leads have contributed to improved planning and prioritization components of resource mechanisms such as CAP, Flash Appeals, CHF, CHAP, CERF	P/O	
Extent to which appeals/proposals clearly reflect cluster priorities rather than any one agency	P/O	
Percent increase in requirements covered in consolidated appeals	E/O	
Percent distribution of funding going to local NGOs and partners	E/O	
Integration of cross cutting themes into Flash/CAP appeals	P/O	
Focal people for each cross cutting theme been identified and regularly consulted	P/O	

PROCESS/OUTPUT 2: PARTNERSHIP AND COHESIVENESS

“Successful application of the cluster approach will depend on all humanitarian actors working as equal partners in all aspects of the humanitarian response: from assessment, analysis and planning to implementation”

Indicators	Type	Data Sources
Collectively shared vision demonstrated through joint strategies and workplans, assessments and appeals which reflect feedback from all cluster members including donors	P/O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint strategy, action and contingency plan - Information management network data - Interviews with HC/RC, HCT, national NGOs, civil society orgs, local authorities, cluster
Harmonization of standards and/or application of minimum standards achieved within cluster setting and partners work within these agreed upon parameters	P/O	
Strategies developed / implemented through the cluster approach take account of and are complementary to those developed by non-cluster members	P/O	

Service provision and performance of each cluster response adequately coordinated with other relevant clusters and based on actual, jointly identified needs rather than existing capacities of cluster participants	E/O	members, cluster leads - Meeting minutes and attendance records - Locally developed MOUs/TORs for: cluster members, between HC/RC and each clusters, and between cluster and government agencies - Documentation of collaborative work across clusters
Extent to which information from needs assessments has been shared with other clusters to avoid repeat assessments	P/O	
Extent to which cluster approach has improved or weakened partnerships between the various sectors and the HCT, the HC/RC	P/O	
Evidence of synergies and linkages across clusters and OCHA's involvement of this process	P/O	
Inter-cluster information management and sharing that is regularly updated and easily accessible	P/O	
In cases of a UN integrated mission, cluster arrangements are linking with relevant department of missions	P/O	
Extent to which the cluster approach builds upon or bypasses pre-existing coordination mechanism	P/O	
Extent to which agencies outside the UN (NGOS, both international and national) are included in cluster decision making (specifically referencing criteria listed in 'Principles of Partnership'⁹)	E/O	

PROCESS/OUTPUT 3: ACCOUNTABILITY

"The cluster approach aims to ensur[e] that within the international humanitarian response, there is a clear system of leadership and accountability for all the key sectors or areas of humanitarian activity."

Indicators	Type	Data Sources
HC/RC has clearly articulated expectations and defined roles and responsibilities for each cluster	P/O	- Reviews of HC/RC TORs and assessment tools - Interviews with HC/RC/HCT members, cluster leads, cluster members - Cluster TORs, workplans /communication records - Interviews/focus groups with beneficiaries - Assessment/ monitoring/ planning records and documents
HC/RC TORs and assessment tools adapted to include clusters within their area of responsibility/examination	P/O	
Extent to which the cluster approach has led to the adoption of common international standards for all aspects of humanitarian response and ensuring their consistent application	E/O	
Joint plans that include detailed monitoring of performance	P/O	
Extent to which cluster strategies / tools / standards have incorporated accountability to beneficiaries as a priority (ETC and Logistics excluded)	P/O	

⁹ *Principles of Partnership* endorsed at the July 2007 Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP)

INPUT/ PROCESS 1: GLOBAL CLUSTER SUPPORT

“The Global Clusters should be a resource that can be called on for advice on global standards, policies and best practice, as well as for operational support, general guidance and training programs.”¹⁰

Indicators	Type	Data Sources
New tools, technical standards and policy guidelines produced at the global level address identified needs at country level and are at high technical standard	P/O	- Interviews with cluster members (global and country level)
Support from the global clusters (technical assistance and training) improving the capacity at country level to deliver including addressing cross cutting issues	E/O	- Workshop/training reports - Direct observation: use of tools and standards at field level
Integration of preparedness/contingency planning/early warning in cluster workplans	P/O	- HR records revealing use of staff from standby rosters
Extent to which the global cluster has provided timely and relevant standby capacity at country level	P/O	- Communication systems and processes from global leads to the field and vice versa
Minimal lag time between onset/declaration of emergency and deployment of emergency sector specialists	P/O	

4.2 Cluster Specific Indicators

All of the clusters should be evaluated on the indicators suggested above (except for ETC and Logistics, which should be excluded as explained more thoroughly below). However, in order not to overlook the difference among clusters, other considerations should be taken into account.

Type of Cluster: Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters function as ‘enablers’ for an operation, supporting partners and their respective clusters and programs. Therefore, their work should be evaluated in terms of its relationship to other clusters and partners (their ‘clients’), not on providing services to affected populations. For these clusters, integration of cross cutting issues or indicators at beneficiary level should not be applied or measured. Some of these indicators are listed below but at the outset of the evaluation, the team should meet with these groups at length to determine a more comprehensive approach to handling these clusters.

The evaluators should also acknowledge and consider instances where there is a food security cluster instead of an agriculture cluster. Further explanation from FAO and the agriculture cluster will help delineate this difference in the field.

Sub-cluster groups: Clusters comprised of distinct sub-groups should each be given due weight in the analysis. In the case of the protection cluster, Focal Point Agencies are responsible for acting as provider of last resort within their particular areas of responsibility, under the overall leadership of

¹⁰ *IASC Operational Guidance: Relationship Between Cluster at Country and Global Levels*, 2007.

the designated cluster lead for protection and as agreed by the protection cluster at the country level. At the global level, and where appropriate at country level, the Protection Cluster Working Group has five Focal Point Agencies that are responsible for specific technical areas.¹¹ This will require attention to a two-tiered accountability framework and the respective responsibilities of Focal Point agencies. In measuring the effectiveness of the protection cluster, therefore, the analysis should distill the achievements and shortcomings in each of these specialized protection areas as well as their integration into the overall protection response.

Duration of operation: Clusters that have only recently begun operating in evaluated countries and at global level should not be expected to have had significant outcomes yet. Expectations should be adjusted to consider realistic achievements and outputs given duration of roll-out. In new operations, some clusters have had a presence in the country of operation prior to a disaster. In this respect, preparedness should be addressed differently.

Funding: Clusters have received varying levels of funding at the country and global levels. When measuring each cluster, the resources they have had to implement and effect change vary and should be closely considered.¹²

Cross-cutting themes: The cross-cutting issues should be examined individually. In order to be useful to the distinct agencies working on them, a disaggregated analysis of how each cross-cutting theme is or is not being integrated into the clusters is necessary. While the indicators to measure cross-cutting integration are similar, each theme should be analyzed on its own.

Further, some clusters such as protection and early recovery work to ensure that these issues are integrated into other cluster work as well. These two clusters should also be evaluated as to the extent to which they have been incorporated into the work and planning of all other clusters (except ETC and logistics).

Note that the indicators below supplement the indicators/questions for the overall approach. All of the clusters (except ETC and Logistics where indicated) will be evaluated on the generic indicators outlined in Section 4.1. These indicators come directly from the clusters at the global level. Some clusters have already developed comprehensive performance frameworks for benchmarking implementation at country level. Where available, these should be used, and the evaluators should build on what already exists and is being regularly measured.

Where possible, the short term and long term effects of the cluster approach should be analysed at country level. The specific indicators for this level analysis will have to be determined at country level as they will vary for each cluster and for each country context.

¹¹ These are: (OHCHR/UNDP for Rule of Law and Justice; UNFPA/UNICEF for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence; UN-HABITAT for Housing, Land and Property Issues; UNICEF for Child Protection; and UNMAS for Mine Action).

¹² In addition to looking at the funding levels at the country level, the Appeal for Building Global Humanitarian Response Capacity 2007 Tabel E: List of Appeals Projects (grouped by cluster), lists the funding levels of each cluster as of 21-Novemembr 2008.

Agriculture

- Availability of funding for medium-term rural livelihood recovery programmes
- Quality of the technical expertise available to/in the cluster
- Definition and application of technical standards within the cluster (with due consideration for a healthy diversity in approaches) [note: a complete homogeneity of approaches would stifle creativity and experimentation]
- Completeness of livelihoods support, i.e. degree to which cluster members support the resumption of all types of rural livelihoods affected by a crisis/disaster (e.g. farming, livestock rearing, poultry raising, etc. including women-led activities), as well as the restoration of community assets (e.g. irrigation canals) and support services (e.g. veterinary health services)
- Timeliness of interventions as compared to the seasonality of rural livelihoods (cropping calendars, fishing seasons, etc.)
Degree to which asset delivery relies upon or instead undermines the private sector (e.g. seed fairs as compared to seed distributions)
- Quality and local adaptability of delivered assets (e.g. seed varieties fit for the local farming systems) verified

Camp Coordination/Management

- Formulation of an operational strategy itemizing roles and responsibilities between the CC, CM by cluster lead
- % of camps covered by CCCM strategy
- Regular information flow between camp managers and camp coordinator
- Extent to which the emergency resulted in IDPs being hosted collectively in camps/sites/temporary settlements

Early Recovery

- Degree to which the early recovery coordination mechanisms in place – Early Recovery Cluster, Network, or both – have achieved mainstreaming of early recovery throughout the work of other clusters.
- Effectiveness of information sharing through cluster/network meetings and other information sharing mechanisms to partners (government, other clusters, implementing partners).
- Early recovery needs and capacities assessed, prioritized and presented in the form of a coherent, cross-sector early recovery strategy that also addresses key cross-cutting issues for early recovery such as gender, disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention
- Early recovery strategies drawn up in close cooperation with other clusters, national and local authorities and other key stakeholders.
- M&E frameworks for early recovery designed and implemented in a way that reflects the multi-dimensional nature of early recovery and allows for early recovery strategies to be tracked and revised as necessary.
- Minimum levels of funding available for early recovery assessment, planning and kick-starting essential early recovery programming.
- The extent to which tools and guidance developed on early recovery at the global level have been applied and adapted as necessary at each country level.
- Local level integrated and coordinated ER Programmes (eg restoration of basic services; reintegration of IDPs; resumption of governance; restoration/creation of livelihoods) implemented within 6-12 months of the ER Strategic Framework/Action Plan

Education

- Extent to which the INEE Minimum Standards are being applied by all education cluster members for programme implementation, preparedness or advocacy
- Number of Education Cluster members, including Ministry of Education, specifically trained on the INEE Minimum Standards, contingency planning, preparedness planning and information management in emergencies.
- % of districts other relevant administrative or geographic entity in the affected area with an Education Cluster / or similar mechanism
- % of Education Cluster requested funding needs funded through either Flash Appeal or CHAP/CAP

Emergency Shelter

- Shelter provision and settlement planning meets minimum spatial standards, and provides beneficiaries adequate protection from climactic and health risks
- Settlement planning provides safe and adequate provision for and/or access to essential services, and livelihood/household activities
- Model of shelter provision promotes beneficiary participation, cultural acceptance, and/or livelihoods activities through maximized use of local building norms, construction techniques, and materials collection and fabrication
- Performance of hazard mapping includes all relevant stakeholders and assesses potential short-, medium-, and long-term risks and vulnerabilities

Emergency Telecommunications

- Number of humanitarian emergencies where the ETC was activated as well as where inter-agency services were provided without formal cluster activation
- The extent to which standardized equipment and operating procedures have been developed
- Number of trained and qualified responders on standby
- Size and performance of partnership agreements increased since the cluster approach
- Extent to which emergency telecommunications provided in a timely and predictable manner

Health

- Benchmarks adopted that help measure impact in terms of saving lives and/or reducing risk/harm.
- Evidence that the Cluster successfully tackled the determinants of delivery of - access to- health care at field level
- Cluster/sector plans take appropriate account of national health policies and strategies and lessons learned from past activities, and incorporate appropriate exit, or transition, strategies.
- Actively participate in the analysis of available information on health status and risks, health resources, and health service performance, and the ongoing monitoring of these key aspects.
- Ensure the rapid establishment of an appropriate early warning and response system (EWARS) for selected, locally relevant epidemic-prone diseases and other conditions, in coordination with national health authorities

Logistics

- Number of partners attending cluster meetings (from start of emergency, for period of three months)
- Range of partners requesting and number using common service provided by the Cluster as a percentage of all members/partners of the Cluster.
- Trained logistics officers placed at central and sub central levels to provide support
- Number of material stockpiles established and maintained and timeliness of distributions
- Incorporation and consideration of Logistics in the Contingency and Preparedness Planning process of a country.

Nutrition

- Information shared across countries where the approach is being used
- National nutrition policies identified and local governance integrated into cluster plans
- Prioritization of nutrition activities and areas of implementation jointly made on basis of information shared.
- Direct links exist between national and sub-national clusters (if relevant)

Protection

- Protection cluster in its strategy and programming reconciled the need for targeted, individual interventions in specific areas such as GBV, child protection etc with the need for a broader, coordinated protection response
- Degree to which the protection cluster developed common messages and advocacy strategies to influence policy or practice (government or other actors, for example the RC/HC)?
- Humanitarian Coordinator mobilized as an effective advocate for protection
- Protection monitoring / information management system established which meets the needs of key stakeholders and generates appropriate follow-up / referrals
- The impact of the cluster's activities on non-cluster members, e.g. ICRC and non-cluster INGOs such as MSF.
- Extent to which the protection cluster sharing information on key protection risks/needs with other clusters /supporting mainstreaming of protection
- Effectiveness of the cluster in engaging national protection stakeholders (government, national human rights NGO, Red Cross and Human Rights Institutions).

Water Sanitation and Hygiene

- Direct links exist between provincial coordination, national coordination and the HC/RC Sector strategy includes emergency response and rehabilitation components
- Partnership agreements with international NGOs and small scale funding agreements has contributed to improving the actual response, ensuring coverage and filling the gaps
- Inter-cluster linkages forged with relevant clusters (health, CCCM, shelter, education, protection, nutrition) according to agreed checklist of roles and responsibilities

4.3 Synthesis Report

The synthesis report will be written with a view towards assessing the overarching aims of the cluster approach. The purpose is to distill major lessons learned about the application of the cluster

approach in the context of the wider humanitarian reform. Any indication of short or long term effects that can be seen should be highlighted in this tier.

This level analysis will help to clarify underlying factors affecting the situation application, highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative), recommend actions to improve performance in both current and the roll-out of future operations, and generate lessons learned.¹³ The evaluators should attempt to uncover good practices that can demonstrate how and why certain applications of the cluster approach work in different situations.¹⁴

Questions which the evaluators should attempt to answer in the overall synthesis report include:

- Effectiveness: Has the cluster approach strengthened the humanitarian response?
- Has the cluster approach helped humanitarian actors deliver more effective and efficient assistance?
- What factors are contributing or hindering the achievement of this objective?
- What have been the unintentional positive or negative results from the cluster approach?
- Efficiency: Have the outcomes justified the investment thus far?
- How is the cluster approach interacting with the other pillars of the humanitarian reform in particular partnership and strengthened coordination?
- How can the cluster approach be strengthened? What further inputs are required?
- Has the cluster approach proven to be a sufficiently flexible instrument to respond to the needs of a range of contexts?
- Are there any intermediate effects or impacts that can be already be demonstrated?

These questions will help the evaluators draw macro level conclusions and the analysis will be drawn from all six case studies as represented in the Evaluation Approach in Diagram 2 above.

V. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

5.1 Qualitative Approach

Where available, quantitative data should be integrated into the methodology. This includes financial data, quantities of goods delivered, and any statistical data around intermediate effects. However, the evaluation will mainly focus on participatory approaches and will rely on interviews with key informants. Perspectives from all stakeholders – both providers and receivers – should be solicited including: cluster leads and cluster members, the HC/RC, the HCT, agencies working outside the cluster approach, beneficiaries, government stakeholders, donors, civil society groups and members (teachers, health workers, religious and other community leaders, local authorities, etc), local NGOs. It is important that opinions are solicited evenly and that they are triangulated appropriately. Evaluators should review the opinions of persons who have been in-country before and after the application of the cluster approach as they can provide insights into any added value of the approach on operations. All data, quantitative and qualitative, should be disaggregated by gender and age.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. UNDP Evaluation Office, 2002.

Beneficiary interviews/ focus groups must ensure that appropriate and ethical standards are used when speaking to various populations, especially children and women. In addition, it is important that a cross section of the affected community is heard (namely women, men, youth, various ethnic groups) to get a realistic representation of the population viewpoints.

A list of agencies and individuals to interview at both country and HQ level should be provided to the evaluators. All of these individuals should be interviewed, as well as any other people that the evaluators deem as key informants. It will be important for the evaluators to examine field level processes (not just those in the capital cities) as these are most revealing of cluster operations and their impact on beneficiaries. A checklist of the minimum persons to be consulted in each country should be created so that there is consistency across countries.

The validity of the findings should be judged based on the logical consistency of the arguments, the quality of the evidence and the degree to which evidence has been corroborated and cross-checked.¹⁵ Workshops to share and validate initial findings should be built into planning after each country consultation to ensure that country teams have the opportunity to give feedback to evaluators. In addition, planners should ensure that the necessary time and resources be allotted for an evaluation of this size and scope. Finally, sufficient time is needed to consult with the clusters and other stakeholders upon completing the evaluation to ensure it accurately reflects cluster realities.

5.2 Country Selection

Comparing data across countries will be a challenge given the multiplicity of actors, various program formats, and large number of different reporting systems. Therefore, while common lessons and findings should be drawn, a cautious approach is recommended in comparing the performances of multiple operations.

Some clusters have not been activated in certain countries and it is essential that each cluster is represented in at least three country settings to ensure that there is enough data to draw well-informed conclusions. Further consultation with clusters may be necessary before country selection is finalized to ensure that they accurately reflect various stages of implementation.

It is crucial that the countries selected be representative of the diversity of situations in which the clusters are operating. Considerations mentioned by clusters and other stakeholders have included:

- Countries with both strong engagement and weak engagement with the government to understand the variations this has on roll-out
- Countries where there was already a strong humanitarian response to determine whether the cluster approach strengthened or weakened the already existing coordination mechanisms
- At least one country with an integrated mission
- Country 'in transition' – where the flash appeal will soon cease to determine how the phase out is being handled
- Equal distribution of countries affected by disaster and those affected by conflict

¹⁵ Hofmann et al.

- Countries where cluster systems have only been partially implemented to determine why this has not happened across the board

5.3 Team Composition

A six person (minimum) team should be hired to complete the evaluation. Evaluators should have significant field experience working in emergencies and each should have expertise in at least one sectoral area. Cross disciplinary evaluators can also be assigned (Health/Nutrition/WASH, or ETC/Logs, for example). An internal advisory group on technical issues should also be developed to provide further support and technical guidance.

5.4 Deliverables

The evaluation should yield six stand-alone reports of country level findings and recommendations. The team leader and perhaps an external analyst should draft a synthesis report which draws overarching conclusions/lessons learned across the six countries and analyses macro-trends in the roll-out and successes/challenges of the cluster approach.

In addition, a clear results framework with indicators and benchmarks should be delivered. These could be delivered in a phased approach so that clusters can determine whether their performance is on track over the course of an operation. These can become the mechanism whereby clusters can monitor their implementation progress. This evaluation should also serve as a baseline for future evaluations of the effectiveness and impact of the cluster approach in terms of the quality of response delivered as well as outlining methodologies and tools for future evaluations.

5.5 Timing

An evaluation this ambitious in size and scope needs adequate time to collect data and analyze findings. Recommended timing for the evaluation is as follows, but will certainly need to be adjusted based on logistics and funding.

Month One

- Desk Review of existing documents and materials including: strategy documents, plans, proposals, monitoring data, mission reports, sitreps, previous evaluations/assessments agency/government/donor evaluations related to the actual performance of the emergency response.
- Consultation with global clusters (leads and member agencies) to determine:
 - o Persons to meet at country level
 - o Further insights into each cluster's operation
 - o Refinement of indicators for each cluster
- Finalize logistics for field visits

Months Two – Six (minimum of 3 weeks per country)

Visits to six selected countries to include consultation at field level (not just at capital). Field visits will include:

- Initial introduction meeting with key stakeholders: cluster leads, HC/RC, HCT
- Meetings with all clusters (leads and member agencies) present at country level and mapping any country specific outcome/effects indicators, reviewing country specific performance frameworks
- Interviews with key personnel, partners, government officials, local NGOs, donors
- Collection of documents produced at country level
- Focus groups/interviews with beneficiaries to elicit feedback from local people on humanitarian operations
- Visits to selected project/program sites areas
- End visit debriefing to share broad findings with clusters and other stakeholders

Month Seven

- Development of a standard report structure for the country reports to facilitate the comparability and analysis
- Write-up of individual country reports
- Submission of first draft to steering committee and clusters who were consulted
- A review workshop held in NYC or Geneva to review substantive issues emerging from the initial draft
- Incorporation of comments and production of second draft
- Sign off by steering committee and submission of six country reports to IASC

Months Eight – Nine

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

VI. LIMITATIONS

The cluster approach is a relatively new method of conducting operations and thus has not been applied consistently across countries or clusters. Adjustments must therefore be made accordingly.

Other limitations to this study are:

Causality and Attribution

It will be difficult to directly attribute changes in humanitarian outcomes to the cluster approach. Isolating change within a wider 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) across six countries will be a significant challenge. The evaluators can strive to reduce uncertainty about the contribution of a program and the apparent achievements of the approach.¹⁶

Lack of Underlying Logical Evaluative Framework

Quality impact assessment requires that simple, realistic, and measurable objectives be established at the beginning of an intervention. As mentioned above, overall objectives for the cluster system were not developed systematically, and so developing this framework has been a process of defining them. The one proposed above attempts to organize the processes, outputs, outcomes and effects into measurable categories, but this exercise should have been done at the outset of the cluster design.

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 control group, the evaluators will need to establish a realistic idea of how operations would have transpired had the approach not been rolled-out.¹⁷

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.

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.

¹⁶ Arntson et al.

¹⁷ Ibid.

VII. CONCLUSION

This evaluation represents an important opportunity to take stock of the cluster approach and document the outcomes it has produced thus far. This evaluation should be seen as means to improving performance of the clusters and humanitarian intervention as a whole. It will have relevance and application not only at country level, but to decision and policy makers throughout the humanitarian community. It has the potential to significantly enhance the efforts that are already being made to ensure the cluster approach is a success.

VIII. APPENDICES

- A. Persons Consulted
- B. Documents Consulted
- C. Background Documents
- D. *Revised Note on a Proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II*, 28 August 2008. Phase II Cluster Evaluation Steering Group