

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
WORKING GROUP

**IASC Subsidiary Bodies**

**Report on the Sub-Working Group on the Cluster Approach  
(SWGCA)<sup>1</sup> Activities in 2011**

*October 2011*

## **I Report on Activities undertaken in 2011**

On 6 December 2010, the Sub-Working Group on the Cluster Approach (SWGCA) held a workshop to prioritize six main actions from the Management Response Plan to the Cluster Approach Evaluation 2 (MRP) for its Work Plan 2011, as requested by the IASC Working Group in November 2010. During 2011, the SWGCA met on a monthly basis to assess progress and to focus on the substance of each of the priorities as necessary.

Based on the six priority actions, the following eight objectives and related activities were identified for 2011:

### **1. Strengthened Inter-Cluster Coordination; defined role of OCHA in Humanitarian Emergencies**

- Develop Guidelines for Inter-Cluster Coordination, aimed for OCHA-specific and wider IASC use
- Disseminate Guidelines to all Country Cluster operations

### **2. Improved timeliness and preparedness by linking Clusters more closely with national actors and other coordination mechanisms**

- Finalise IASC Guidance note on working with national authorities and local actors
- Revise activation process to include mapping of in-country coordination capacity and ensuring complementarity/ support to existing coordination structure

### **3. Clarity on how Clusters may be transitioned or adopted during the post-emergency phase**

- Produce guidance on transition/adaptation of clusters, including on the HCT

### **4. Strengthened leadership roles of NGOs in Clusters at the country level**

- Collate 'good practices' of NGOs in leadership role, agreeing to a glossary of common terminology

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the IASC Task Team on the Cluster Approach (Decision of the 79<sup>th</sup> IASC Working Group, July 2011). It was also decided that the Global Cluster Coordination Group would no longer be associated with the IASC, but would continue to meet on an ad hoc basis, reporting to the IASC Sub-Working Group on the Cluster Approach, and that the current division of labour should stand. For the sake of clarity, the designation SWGCA is used throughout this document.

- Survey experience of Clusters as Providers of Last Resort
- Prepare policy discussion for IASC WG on NGO Cluster Leadership, including issue of Provider of Last Resort

#### **5. Improved accountability to affected populations**

- Organize a consultation workshop between clusters and experts to develop practical tools that can be readily adopted and piloted in the field
- Begin piloting an accountability feedback mechanism for affected populations in 3 agreed countries by all clusters over the next 2 years, and include mechanism in all future cluster guidance and training

#### **6. Effective mechanism for monitoring the performance of clusters at the country-level**

- Clusters to share internal performance monitoring tools with the SWGCA for review - both on coordination and partnership, as well as on service delivery and activities
- Review performance monitoring with regards to cluster and inter-cluster functional performance, as well as effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a cross-cluster and inter-cluster tool (building on previous attempts)

#### **7. Defined criteria for considering requests from RC/HCs and HCTs for inter-cluster support missions**

- Develop and submit for endorsement by the IASC WG Guidelines for Inter-Cluster Support Missions
- Request the Global Cluster Coordinators to plan and follow-up on agreed mission requests

#### **8. Effective dialogue with the IASC HC Group, GCC, and other IASC subsidiary bodies, focusing on promoting country level results**

- Meeting with IASC HC Group on leadership issues, develop options for a possible merger
- Periodic interaction with the Global Cluster Coordinators (GCC), referring operational issues
- Develop options for streamlining coordination bodies with IASC

In order to take certain priority issues forward, six Sub-groups were established under the leadership of assigned focal points/groups: (i) Accountability to Affected Populations; (ii) Inter-Cluster Coordination; (iii) Leadership Role of NGOs; (iv) Performance Framework; (v) Preparedness; and (vi) Transition.

Following the establishment of the Principals Task Team (PTT) and Directors Task Team (DTT), a further objective and related activity was added to the Work Plan in May 2011, in an attempt to align the work undertaken by the SWGCA with the action points emerging from the PTT's discussions:

#### **9. Effective dialogue with the IASC DTT to ensure coordinated follow-up on cluster related action points and other issues agreed on by the Principals**

- Regular reporting to the DTT.

## 1.1 Achievements in line with the 2011 Work Plan

### Objective 1

A draft version of ‘**Guidance on Inter-Cluster Coordination**’ dated 3 June 2011 was developed by the Sub-Group on Inter-Cluster Coordination and submitted to the DTT at their July meeting with a request for decisions on key issues which need to be agreed before the guidance can be finalized. The DTT did not discuss the issue in any detail (nor at their September meeting) so the SWGCA will continue to work on the guidance through bilateral consultations.

### Objective 2

In July 2011, the IASC endorsed the ‘**Guidance Note on Working with National Authorities**’, drafted by the SWGCA following extensive consultations. The Note provides guidance on how the international humanitarian community should support, work with and negotiate with national authorities. i.e. internationally recognized or de facto national government of a country in which a humanitarian operation is taking place, including all line ministries, departments, institutions, agencies and other actors exercising governmental authority from the national to local level. The Note includes sections on working with national actors on preparedness, capacity development and building as outlined in the MRP. It was disseminated to all relevant stakeholders at global and country level.

The Sub-Group recognized the need to link up with the IASC SWG on **Preparedness** to ensure that the work of each group complements the other. It will continue its efforts related to inter-agency contingency planning once the IASC SWG on Preparedness finalizes its report on strengthening national/local capacity in contingency planning in “3 pilot countries” (Nepal, Uganda, Ghana) - part of its “Five Country Initiative” - by mid-October in preparation for discussion at the IASC WG in November 2011. This is also to ensure linkages with relevant inter-agency, cluster and agency-specific preparedness activities.

### Objective 3

The Sub-Group on **Cluster Transition** has produced a final draft document based on the broad outlines identified at the June 2011 OCHA/DOCO/BCPR Workshop in New York (Joint Workshop on Lessons Learned and Good Practice for the Transition of Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms to Support Recovery and Development). The guidance seeks to focus on the transition of clusters (also commonly referred to as “adaptation” or “phase down/out” of clusters) within the broader context of transition from the humanitarian phase to recovery,.

The draft document will be shared with the SWGCA in November 2011 and, having incorporated their comments, will be submitted to the IASC WG for final approval.

### Objective 4

The Sub-Group on **Leadership Role of NGOs** collected examples of experience to date, including good practices, but also some of the challenges faced at the country level. In order to support an action-oriented discussion at the DTT and donors meeting on 27 September 2011, the SWGCA sub-group was asked to prepare a draft document on “NGOs and Cluster Leadership at Country Level”. The document advocated for system-wide endorsement and support for co-leadership, while also summarizing the main impediments to co-leadership. It also included a number of recommendations to the DTT and donors on the way forward. Again, this issue was not discussed by the DTT and donors in any detail, so the SWGCA will continue

its work in this area with a view to submitting its findings and/or recommendations to the IASC WG.

The SWGCA decided not to take up the issue of Provider of Last Resort given the on-going engagement on this issue at the Principals' level.

#### **Objective 5**

A workshop on **Accountability to Affected Populations** was convened on 1 July 2011, building on existing efforts in this area. It brought together representatives of clusters and accountability experts to review the contents of an operational framework and a set of organizational commitments to be presented to the IASC Principals.

The group met again on 15 September to review the revised operational framework which will be circulated at the Director level for further comments and contributions prior to the meeting of the PTT at the end of 2011. Separate meetings on communication and feedback/complaints mechanisms were also convened. The group will engage with forthcoming Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) pilot projects to advance accountability, in particular through clusters.

#### **Objective 6**

The Sub-Group on **Performance** dealing with developing mechanisms for monitoring the performance of clusters at the country level undertook an initial collation of cluster performance management tools (WASH, Health, Shelter). A short background table, showing existing performance monitoring tools and their current focus, was prepared to inform DTT workshop.

In addition, a background paper was drafted outlining the potential scope of different levels of performance monitoring and the role of a future tool and its complementarity with other performance monitoring mechanisms (i.e. RTEs, Humanitarian Dashboard, CAP/MYR, etc). The paper was shared with the wider SWGCA for discussion/agreement on the way forward. A background paper on "Current/Proposed Tools and Mechanisms to Monitor Performance and Impact" was prepared by the Sub-Group to inform discussion during the DTT Workshop on 28th September 2011.

#### **Objective 7**

The Global Cluster Coordination Group finalized a '**Guidance on Inter-Cluster Support Missions**' which was approved by the SWGCA, endorsed by the IASC Working Group on 6 April 2011 and widely disseminated. The overall rationale for inter-cluster support missions is to support national and humanitarian actors at the country level to achieve a humanitarian response of the highest quality possible, by strengthening coordination between and within every part of the humanitarian system and improving overall cluster performance.

No inter-cluster support missions were requested during the reporting period.

#### **Objective 8**

The activities related to this objective were put on hold, **pending the outcome of the IASC PTT and DTT process** to see whether still appropriate.

Although convened on an ad hoc basis, the **Global Cluster Coordination Group** met regularly to discuss country specific/cluster-related issues in an informal, task-oriented and operational manner (e.g. Haiti) and to be briefed on upcoming events and other ongoing processes (e.g. the PTT/DTT discussions).

#### **Objective 9**

During the reporting period, the SWGCA followed and contributed to the **PTT/DTT process**. Taking into account that there were many areas of synergy/overlap, it was inevitable that some of the work of the SWGCA would be temporarily delayed by this process, and that the workplan of the SWGCA for 2012 would be to some extent determined by the final outcome of this process. For this reason, the SWGCA is scheduling a workshop in November 2011 where it will be in a better position to take stock of PTT decisions and to plan for 2012.

### **1.2 Opportunities and constraints faced by the subsidiary body**

The DTT/PTT process presented both opportunities and constraints to the SWGCA. Uncertainty about the outcome of the DTT and PTT discussions and how their decisions would impact the work of the SWGCA caused a temporary delay in progress in a number of areas (e.g. producing guidance on inter-cluster coordination). This work can now be completed. At the same time, the engagement of the Principals and Directors on many of the issues central to the work of the SWGCA has given the group new momentum, and has confirmed the importance of its mandate; much of the 2011 work-plan of the SWGCA was directly linked to the transformative actions identified by the PTT in April 2011, and this will continue to be the case in 2012.

One constraint the SWGCA constantly faces is the time its members can commit to the work of the group, given the range of commitments they all have in other inter-agency forums. The Co-Chairs are grateful for all their efforts this year and hope they can count on their continued engagement in 2012.

## II Status Update with Reference to Objectives Set in the 2011 Work Plan

Objectives	Activities	Status / Update
1. Strengthened Inter-Cluster Coordination; Defined role of OCHA in Humanitarian Emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Guidelines for Inter-Cluster coordination, aimed for OCHA-specific and wider IASC use.</li> <li>• Disseminate Guidelines to all Country Cluster operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A draft version of ‘Guidance on Inter-Cluster Coordination’ dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June was developed by the SWG and submitted to the DTT at their July meeting with a request for decisions on key issues which need to be agreed before the guidance can be finalized (questions are attached as Annex 1).</li> </ul>
2. Improved timeliness and preparedness by linking Clusters more closely with national actors, and other coordination mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise IASC Guidance note on working with national authorities and local actors</li> <li>• Revise activation process to include mapping in-country coordination capacity and ensuring complementarity/support to existing coordination structure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed, endorsed by the IASC WG in July 2011 and disseminated.</li> <li>• The IASC SWG on Preparedness will finalize its ‘3 pilot country’ report (Nepal, Uganda, Ghana) by mid-October in preparation for discussion at the IASC WG in November.</li> </ul>
3. Clarity on how Clusters may be transitioned or adopted during the post-emergency phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce guidance on transition/adaptation of clusters, including on the HCT.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group working on this has produced a final draft which it will share with the SWG in September 2011 and, having incorporated their comments, will submit to the IASC WG for their final approval.</li> </ul>

4. Strengthened leadership roles of NGOs in clusters at the country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate 'good practice' of NGOs in leadership role, agreeing to a glossary of common terminology.</li> <li>• Survey experience of clusters as Providers of Last Resort</li> <li>• Preparing policy discussion for IASC WG on NGO Cluster Leadership, including issue of Provider of Last Resort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The small group has collected examples of experience to date, including good practice but also some of the challenges faced at the country level. The group is currently finalizing a paper to be submitted to the wider SWG.</li> <li>• The SWG group decided not to take up the issue of PoLR given the DTT's engagement on the issue. The SWG will liaise with UNICEF to ensure complementarity with the co-leadership issue</li> <li>• Once paper is finalized, SWG will prepare for policy discussion at IASC WG.</li> </ul>
5. Improved accountability to affected populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a consultation workshop between clusters and experts to develop practical tools that can be readily adopted and piloted in the field;</li> <li>• Begin piloting an accountability feedback mechanism for affected populations in 3 agreed countries by all clusters over the next 2 years, and include mechanism in all future cluster guidance and training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A workshop was convened on 1 July in Geneva with representatives of clusters and accountability experts to review the contents of an operational framework and set of organizational commitments to be presented to the IASC Principals.</li> <li>• The group met again on 15 September to review the revised operational framework. Separate meetings on communication and feedback/complaints mechanisms will be convened in the coming weeks.</li> <li>• The operational framework will be circulated at the Director level for further comments and contributions prior to the meeting of the IASC Principals at the end of the year.</li> <li>• The group will engage with forthcoming ECB pilot projects to advance accountability, in particular through clusters. Consideration is being given to establishing an Advisory Board, which could directly inform the operational framework under development.</li> </ul>
6. Effective mechanism for monitoring the performance of clusters at the country-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clusters to share internal performance monitoring tools with the SWG for review - both on coordination and partnership, as well as on service delivery and activities;</li> <li>• Review performance monitoring with regards to cluster and inter-cluster functional performance, as well as effectiveness of interventions;</li> <li>• Develop a cross-cluster and inter-cluster tool (building on previous attempts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial collation of cluster performance management tools undertaken (WASH, Health, Shelter).</li> <li>• Background paper prepared outlining the potential scope of different levels of performance monitoring and the role of a future tool and its complementarity with other performance monitoring mechanisms (i.e. RTEs, humanitarian Dashboard, CAP/MYR, etc). Paper and existing tools to be shared with the wider SWGCA for discussion/agreement on the way forward.</li> <li>• Short background table in preparation, showing existing performance monitoring tools and their current focus, to inform DTT workshop.</li> </ul>

7. Defined criteria for considering requests from RC/HCs and HCTs for inter-cluster support missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and submit for endorsement by the IASC WG Guidelines for Inter-Cluster Support Missions.</li> <li>• Request the Global Cluster Coordinators to plan and follow-up on agreed Mission requests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed, endorsed by IASC WG (April 2011) and disseminated.</li> <li>• There have not been any further inter-cluster support missions in the reporting period.</li> </ul>
8. Effective dialogue with the IASC HC Group, GCC, and other IASC subsidiary bodies, focusing on promoting country level results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with IASC HC Group on leadership issues, develop options for a possible merger.</li> <li>• Periodic interaction with the Global Cluster Coordinators (GCC), referring operational issues,</li> <li>• Develop options for streamlining coordination bodies with IASC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awaiting outcome of IASC Principals and Directors processes to see if still appropriate.</li> <li>• Happens continuously.</li> <li>• Completed.</li> </ul>