



**Honduras 2024 UNHCR/Santi Palacios**

A child plays in Cedeño, Honduras, where sea level rise and insecurity are forcing families to flee once again.

Protection Field Coordination Toolkit

# Chapter 1: Humanitarian Coordination Overview



Global Protection Cluster

# Chapter 1: Humanitarian Coordination Overview

## Overview

This Toolkit can be used by all Protection Clusters and cluster-like mechanisms – such as Protection Sectors and Protection Working Groups – working within interagency response settings. This guidance is also available to partners and other organisations who want to understand the principles and practices of protection coordination.

### This chapter contains:

- Explanation of humanitarian coordination and its mechanisms
- Key coordination models: Internal displacement, refugee response, mixed situations, and migrant coordination
- Introduction to the cluster approach
- Cluster activation process and criteria

Humanitarian coordination involves bringing humanitarian actors together to ensure a coherent and principled response to emergencies. This chapter outlines the different types of coordination mechanisms, including the cluster approach, and explains how they function in varying contexts, such as internal displacement, refugee situations, mixed settings, and migrant response coordination.

## Cluster Administration Tools and Documents

The GPC maintains an inventory of working cluster administration documents including those linked to terms of references, day-to-day administrative tasks (including presentations and meeting note templates), example documents linked to the HPC and Pooled Fund processes and other cluster tasks. Please reach out to the GPC if you would need any existing templates or examples from other operations.

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## 1.1 Core Concepts and Principles

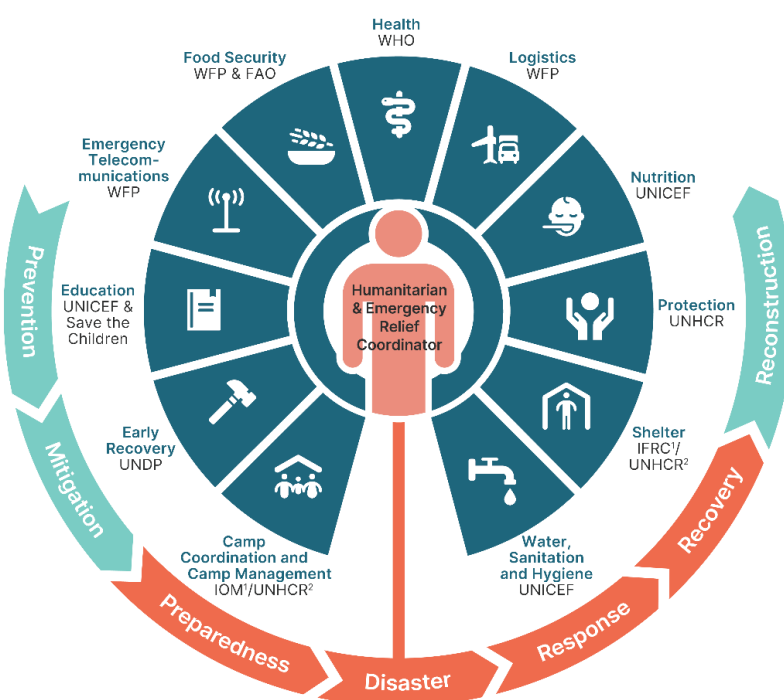
### The Cluster Approach

The **IASC cluster system** is designed to ensure that international responses to humanitarian emergencies involving internal displacement are predictable, accountable, and have clear leadership when government-led coordination is overwhelmed or constrained. It has specific characteristics and accountabilities, and applies in non-refugee humanitarian emergencies, whether resulting from conflict or disaster.

The cluster approach was established in 2005 as part of the UN's Humanitarian Reform Agenda. Its aim is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of international humanitarian response.<sup>1</sup>

**FIND OUT MORE:** The **IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level** is the core guidance for clusters (available in more languages in the table below).

At country level, a cluster is formally activated by the IASC upon agreement with the government and the UN's Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained in their ability to coordinate and respond to identified needs in line with humanitarian principles. When a cluster response is activated, the HC has overall leadership for it. Each cluster is accountable to the HC through its CLA, as well as to national authorities and people affected by the crisis. A **Cluster Coordination team** is appointed, to facilitate the core functions of the cluster.



In some cases, the cluster system may coexist with other forms of national or international coordination, and its application must consider the specific needs of a country and the context.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://reliefweb.int/topics/cluster-coordination> and Global Education Cluster, Save the Children, Translators Without Borders (2020) Quick Guide on humanitarian coordination and the cluster approach.

**“The Cluster Approach aims to add value to humanitarian coordination through:**

- ✓ **Increased transparency and accountability:** Greater transparency in resource allocation, co-leadership, and operational performance leads to greater accountability.
- ✓ **Enhanced predictability:** Sector and thematic responsibilities are now clearer, and formal mechanisms exist to clarify those areas where they are not, both at national and international level.
- ✓ **Engagement with national and local authorities:** Having a single person to call within the international humanitarian architecture speeds up the resolution of issues and allows greater access for the non-governmental community to government and UN decision-makers.
- ✓ **Inclusion of affected communities:** Tools and services developed through the Cluster Approach ensure those who know the most appropriate solutions to their problems be engaged in formulating the response. It also gives those affected by crises access to government and decision-makers.
- ✓ **More effective advocacy:** Where the Clusters, singly or collectively, speak with one voice on issues of common concern, including those affecting groups who are not normally heard.
- ✓ **Joint strategic and operational planning:** The formal process of coordination within and between Clusters enhances efficiency while improving effectiveness.”

Source: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/what-cluster-approach>

## Cluster Activation

Clusters are temporary coordination mechanisms, activated where needed when a government’s capacity to coordinate is limited or constrained. **The criteria for cluster activation are met when:**

1. Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.
2. Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles, due to the scale of need, the number of actors involved, the need for a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or other constraints.<sup>2</sup>

**There is a defined process of activation of the IASC clusters:**

**At country level,** the process is led by the UN’s RC/HC, in consultation with the UN Country Team / Humanitarian Country Team (UNCT/HCT) and supported by OCHA. The initial step is consultation with the national authorities to establish which humanitarian coordination mechanisms already exist and their respective capacities. If the need to activate the clusters is identified, the RC/HC in consultation with the UNCT/HCT determines which clusters should be recommended for activation and selects CLAs. Once this is agreed at country level, the RC/HC sends their proposal in writing to the IASC Emergency Directors’ Group (EDG) Chair who transfers it on to the EDG members for consideration.<sup>3</sup> Endorsement of activation (or feedback) is then sent by the EDG Chair to the RC/HC.

Final arrangements at country-level should be dictated by operational circumstances, including the presence and capacity of partners. More detail on the activation process can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> IASC (2015) IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level, Section 2 Cluster Activation p.9-11

<sup>3</sup> This part of cluster activation used to be the responsibility of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and IASC Principals, but in December 2021 was delegated to the EDG. The IASC EDG is composed of representatives from about 20 IASC member organizations and partners/observers, advising on strategic and operational issues for humanitarian response.

## The process of activating the Protection Cluster

Activation of the Protection Cluster means activation of all aspects of protection, and this may or may not require the activation of all technical coordination areas. Each relevant technical area will be activated based on need. It is the role of each lead-agency to advocate for the activation of relevant technical areas.

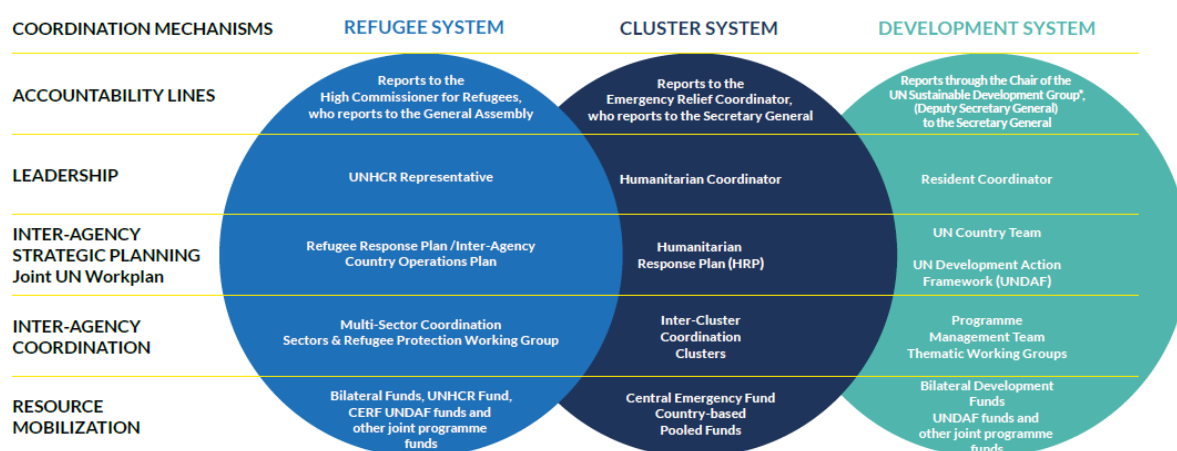
## Non-cluster Coordination Models

### ‘Cluster-like’ mechanisms

Where clusters are not activated, a crisis response is government-led. In some cases, governments utilise sectoral coordination mechanisms. These are often referred to as ‘cluster-like’ mechanisms, such as Sectors or Working Groups. Government-led emergency or crisis sectoral coordination mechanisms report to the relevant government bodies. For these, international humanitarian support is used to augment national capacity. These sectors or working groups often adhere to the same principles of predictability and accountability as the cluster approach.

### Refugee Response

In situations involving refugees, UNHCR leads and coordinates the refugee response, under its mandated responsibility for refugee protection. The Refugee Coordination Model provides the framework for refugee response leadership and coordination. The IASC cluster system is not applied in refugee crises. See [here](#) for more on the refugee coordination model.



\* the UN Development System is under reform

### IDP and Refugee “Mixed Situations”

A “mixed situations” is one where there are active clusters, under an appointed Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and where a UNHCR-led refugee operation is underway. In this case, the Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations sets out leadership and coordination arrangements. This includes the respective roles and responsibilities of the UNHCR Representative and the HC, and the interaction of IASC coordination (clusters) and UNHCR’s refugee coordination mechanisms. See [here](#) for more on mixed coordination models.

### Migrant Response Coordination

Where migrants are affected by conflicts and disasters, the global guidance is to mainstream their needs into existing humanitarian coordination frameworks before considering alternative coordination arrangements,

based on needs not on status. In mixed settings involving migrants, refugees and potential asylum seekers, IOM alongside UNHCR coordinate with other UN agencies and stakeholders to ensure that assistance is complementary with broader humanitarian response operations. See [here](#) for Migrants in Countries in Crisis Guidance.

### Understanding the Simplification Recommendations & the Humanitarian Reset

In 2022, an [Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy](#) was published, with 6 specific recommendations to improve the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy. This included one recommendation to ‘simplify’ the protection coordination architecture. This recommendation and the commitments made by the cluster lead agency to operationalise this recommendation, are often referred to as ‘the simplification recommendations.’

In June 2025, the IASC Principals decided that in the context of the Humanitarian Reset the Protection Cluster should be simplified through the consolidation of the Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and Mine Action AoRs into one integrated Protection Cluster. The Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) AoR is in the process of being integrated into a new Cluster consisting of Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM). To operationalize the consolidation and simplification of the Global Protection Cluster and the Protection Clusters in country operations, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNMAS have agreed upon a set of guidelines which will assist Protection Cluster and AOR coordinators to manage the process.

Read more: [IASC Cluster Simplification: Interim Messages to Country Operations](#).

## 1.2 Core Functions of a Protection Cluster

### “6 + 1” Core Functions

There are “6 + 1” core functions of a country-level Cluster – laid out in the [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination](#) (see [1.10 Key Resources and Tools](#) for other languages). At country level, the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) is accountable for ensuring that cluster leadership and its core functions are carried out effectively. The CLA appoints a Cluster Coordinator, who, with a cluster coordination team, works on behalf of the cluster to achieve its core functions. **It might be useful to think of a cluster coordination team as service providers – tasked with delivering and facilitating the core functions and working for the benefit of Cluster members.** This Toolkit provides guidance, templates, and tools to support a Protection Cluster coordination team’s day-to-day work towards achieving these core functions.

#### Cluster Core Functions – 6+1

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. To support service delivery</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a platform that ensures service delivery is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities.</li> <li>• Developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery.</li> <li>• <i>Examples: 5W, service mapping, referral pathways and information sharing protocols.</i></li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>2. To inform the HC/HCT’s strategic decision-making</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities.</li> <li>• Identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues.</li> <li>• Formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.</li> </ul> |



|                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Examples: Protection monitoring and protection assessments, Protection Analysis Updates, HCT briefings.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>3. To plan and implement cluster strategies</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines.</li> <li>• Clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.</li> <li>• <i>Examples: Protection Cluster Strategy, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, Country-Based Pooled Funds</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>4. To monitor and evaluate performance</b>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and reporting on activities and needs.</li> <li>• Measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results.</li> <li>• Recommending corrective action where necessary.</li> <li>• <i>Examples: Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring, regular funding review, reporting against HRP's objectives and indicators.</i></li> <li>• <b>Further Guidance:</b> For practical guidance on how Protection Clusters can monitor the quality of partner programmes and services – including spot checks, field visits, and use of community feedback – see the <i>GPC Guidance on Monitoring the Quality of Protection Programmes and Services</i> (available on request from the OpsCell).</li> </ul> |
| <b>5. To build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that there is a contingency plan with preparedness activities.</li> <li>• Localisation is prioritised through capacity building for of local authorities and civil society.</li> <li>• A transition strategy is developed when relevant.</li> <li>• <i>Examples: training for local partners, transition strategy, localisation strategy, contributions to contingency plans.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>6. To support robust advocacy</b>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying concerns and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action.</li> <li>• Undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.</li> <li>• <i>Examples: Advocacy strategy, protection briefings to ICCG/HCT/Donors and other stakeholders, advocacy messages and products, media and communications.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>(+1). Promote and strengthen Accountability to Affected People</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that members have clear policy on key AAP aspects like the Code of Conduct, PSEA, child safeguarding.</li> <li>• Ensuring that complaints and feedback mechanisms are in place.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Provider of Last Resort

In addition to supporting the six core functions of the cluster, the designated Cluster Lead Agency is the Provider of Last resort (PoLR). The IASC Reference Module describes this as “where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, the cluster lead, as POLR, must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil crucial gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-led Humanitarian Response Plan.”

In line with the recommendations on the simplification of the Protection architecture, and the processes linked to the humanitarian reset, the Provider of Last Resort accountability of lead agencies remains, including in situations where coordination teams / staff may not be fully dedicated to cluster coordination functions.

## Durable Solutions

A Protection Cluster should ensure integration of solutions throughout its work and in the Protection response. Planning for durable solutions for affected individuals and communities is at the heart of the fundamental principles of protection. See more in **Chapter 7: Durable Solutions** – of this Toolkit.

## Engagement with Government and Local Authorities

Appropriate engagement with government authorities at national and local level is a vital component of successful cluster coordination. Engagement levels are specific and might change over time. Engagement strategies are likely to differ at national and local levels.

At national level, engagement can vary from a government body taking on leadership of the Cluster, to liaison supported by the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA). At local level, the actors national or sub-national Protection Cluster engages with might differ from national level.

**FIND OUT MORE:** See IASC [Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities](#), 2011 (and Key Resources below) for guidance on national authorities' responsibilities, scenarios of authorities' willingness and ability to contribute to coordination, and strengthening national response capacities.

## 1.3 Cluster Membership and Participation

### Core Concepts and Principle

#### Who is a Cluster Member?

The Global Cluster Coordination Group **provides the following definitions**<sup>4</sup>.

#### GCCG Definitions of Members:

**Partners or Members**<sup>5</sup>: Local, national or international organizations which participate in a cluster at national or subnational levels and adhere to the minimum commitments for cluster participation, as outlined in the IASC Reference Module on Cluster Coordination. In particular, cluster members commit to actively participate in the cluster; contribute to the cluster's response plan and activities; work cooperatively with other cluster members; take on leadership responsibilities, as needed; and adhere to humanitarian principles, the Principles of Partnership, cluster-specific guidance and internationally recognized programme standards, including the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse – among a range of commitments.

**Observers**: Local, national or international organizations which may engage but do not formally participate in a cluster, contribute to its work or coordinate with the UN due their mandate or independent nature of their functioning (e.g. ICRC or MSF). Observers also can include entities which are not operational in the technical area (e.g. donors, academia, private sector companies, OCHA or even

<sup>4</sup> GCCG (2023) Country-level Cluster Terms and Definitions

<sup>5</sup> For some CLAs and Global Clusters, the term 'cluster members' refers only to those entities which go through a formal membership application process, are official signatories to a strategy, or provide direct delivery of activities included in the cluster response plan. For them, the term 'cluster partners' refers to any entity that engages in humanitarian action and attends clusters meetings. (GCCG, 2023)



other cluster coordinators). They may be invited to cluster meetings on the basis of the unique expertise or perspective they bring and are not required to adhere to all of the minimum commitments for cluster participation, as outlined in the IASC Reference Module on Cluster Coordination.

## Principles of Partnership

The Principles of Partnership are the commitments of UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on how they will work together<sup>6</sup>. They also provide a basis for how all actors in the humanitarian space (UN, INGOs, NNGOs, government, private sector, and affected populations) can engage in a more equal, constructive, and transparent way. A Protection Cluster should follow these principles and promote them with cluster members. They help define an ideal culture for cluster coordination.

- **Equality.** Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognise each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organisations from engaging in constructive dissent.
- **Transparency.** Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organisations.
- **Result-oriented approach.** Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and operational capacities.
- **Responsibility.** Humanitarian organisations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.
- **Complementarity.** The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

## Minimum Commitments for Cluster Participation

The IASC minimum commitments for cluster participation set out what all local, national, or international organizations should undertake to contribute. They emphasize mutual responsibility, not seeking to establish barriers or exclude organizations or authorities from participation in clusters.

### Minimum Commitments for Cluster Participation

The minimum commitments are not prescriptive [...] since cluster-based responses vary greatly in scale and complexity. They are a starting point and should be considered as an absolute minimum.

1. Commitment to humanitarian principles, the Principles of Partnership, cluster-specific guidance and internationally recognized programme standards, including on PSEA.
2. Commitment to mainstream protection in programme delivery (including principles of non-discrimination, do no harm).

<sup>6</sup> The Principles of Partnership Statement of Commitment was endorsed in 2007 by the Global Humanitarian Platform, comprising UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations.

3. Readiness to participate in actions that specifically improve accountability to affected people, in line with the IASC Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations.
4. A demonstrated understanding of the duties and responsibilities associated with membership of the cluster, as defined by IASC ToRs and guidance notes, any cluster-specific guidance, and country cluster ToRs, where available.
5. Active participation in the cluster and a commitment to consistently engage in the cluster's collective work.
6. Capacity and willingness to contribute to the cluster's response plan and activities, which must include inter-cluster coordination.
7. Commitment to mainstream key programmatic cross-cutting issues (including age, gender, environment, HIV/AIDs).
8. Commitment by a relevant senior staff member to work consistently with the cluster to fulfil its mission.
9. Commitment to work cooperatively with other cluster partners to ensure an optimal and strategic use of available resources and share information on organizational resources.
10. Willingness to take on leadership responsibilities in sub-national or working groups, subject to capacity and mandate.
11. Undertake advocacy, and disseminate advocacy messages to affected communities, the host Government, donors, the HCT, CLAs, the media and other audiences.
12. Ensure that the cluster provides interpretation (in an appropriate language) so that all cluster partners are able to participate, including local organizations (and national and local authorities where appropriate).

**Source:** IASC (2015) *IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordinator at Country Level, Section 7 Minimum Commitments for Participation in Clusters p.23-25.*

## Role of the Protection Cluster in Engagement with Partners

### Setting Commitments for Cluster Partners

It can be helpful to draft context-specific guidance on minimum commitments for participation in the Cluster, and expectations of Cluster members. For example, where organizations who are new to implementing humanitarian response or new to working in the cluster system are Cluster partners. The above minimum commitments from the IASC guidance can be contextualised and added to as appropriate. This type of document ideally should be drafted with inputs from cluster members. Discussion on this could be complemented by communication on the benefits of cluster membership/participation for organizations.

### Tips for Encouraging Participation of Cluster Partners

- Ensure organizations have something to gain from being a Cluster partner. Benefits may include access to up-to-date critical information required for programming, technical guidance and support, opportunity to engage with authorities to ease implementation, opportunity to engage with donors.<sup>7</sup>
- Keep information and reporting demands to a minimum. Establish clear understanding on information required from Cluster partners, in what form, and how often – and share products back with partners.
- Engage directly and actively with members to understand their expectations and constraints.

<sup>7</sup> Global Health Cluster (2020) Health Cluster Guide – A Practical Handbook

- You might need to make specific effort to ensure inclusion and encourage the full participation of local and national actors.

### Briefing New Cluster Members

When new organizations join the Protection Cluster – especially local and national actors who might not have worked in a cluster system before – you should ensure that they understand and can fully participate in the Cluster.

Consider briefing new members as necessary on the cluster approach, coordination meetings, cluster governance structures, what being a cluster member involves, value to them of being a cluster member, and how they can access any Cluster tools, technical guidance, and information products.

**SEE:** [Quick Guide on Humanitarian Coordination & the Cluster Approach](#) online in multiple languages.

### Introduction/Briefing Packs

If you are working in a context where there are often new actors joining or engaging with the Protection Cluster, you might want to consider developing an introduction or briefing pack that introduces what the Cluster does and what guidelines and standards are available. Or, if the Cluster produces many guidelines this can also act as a reference document for Cluster members to easily access relevant links.

Introduction / briefing packs can be useful for local / national actors who are less familiar with the coordination system – explaining the work of the Protection Cluster and demonstrating the value the Cluster could bring to them, to encourage their engagement. Don't forget to translate these into relevant languages.

## 1.4 Shared Leadership

### Overview of Shared Leadership / Co-Coordination

#### Structure & Responsibilities

Sharing Protection Cluster leadership is about sharing responsibilities for leading and coordinating the Cluster between the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA – either UNHCR or OHCHR) and a Cluster co-coordinating NGO – another humanitarian organization (INGO or NNGO) or with government. Different shared leadership structures can be put in place according to the context, covering both national and sub-national level. For example, at national level leadership might be shared between the CLA, government authority, and an NGO. Or a national NGO might be the co-coordinating NGO with the CLA, and a local NGO in one sub-national location.

#### Shared Leadership with NGOs

The [IASC Guidance on Cluster Coordination](#) endorses NGO co-coordination as a good practice, strengthening the overall effectiveness of a cluster. The [GPC Guidance Note on Protection Cluster Co-Coordination](#) includes guidance and an MoU template, and the [NGO Cluster Co-Coordination Manual](#), is a useful resource, containing guidance and tools including example ToRs.

Sharing leadership strengthens participation of NGOs and promotes the principles of partnership in the Cluster, strengthens links between sub-national or field level and the national Cluster, and enables the Cluster to benefit from NGO technical expertise: *“When clusters share leadership [...] partnerships, advocacy, and*

information transfer tend to improve. Sharing leadership produces stronger engagement and better coordination”.<sup>8</sup> It's particularly good practice for national and local actors to be Cluster co-ordination roles.

While NGO co-ordination is promoted as good practice, it requires capacities, time, and resources for the Co-Coordinating NGO to make co-ordination and co-leadership work.

### Definitions

The CLA takes overall responsibility for the leadership and coordination of the cluster and is responsible to ensure that the cluster is functioning at the highest standards in meeting its core functions. The CLA assumes associated responsibilities for the allocation of resources for the coordination of the cluster, including minimum required staffing (i.e. Protection Cluster Coordinator – hereafter: “**the Coordinator**”). The CLA is also the Provider of Last Resort (POLR) and directly accountable to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

The NGO, selected as the Protection Cluster co-coordinating agency to co-ordinate the Cluster, is referred to as “**Co-Coordinating NGO**” and the appointed staff is referred to as “the Co-Coordinator”.

In line with Grand Bargain and IASC commitments on localization, wherever feasible, the co-coordinating agency of the Protection Cluster will be a national NGO.

**See:** [Global Protection Cluster \(GPC\) Guidance Note on Protection Cluster Co-Coordination](#)

### Shared Leadership with Government

Active engagement of national and local government authorities in protection coordination where this is possible can strengthen its effectiveness and support efficient transition and deactivation of the Cluster in the longer-term. The level of engagement of government authorities in Protection Cluster coordination at national and sub-national levels will vary depending on the context, and the willingness and capacity of authorities to lead or contribute to coordination of the response in line with humanitarian principles.

IASC clusters are formally activated when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained. However, in situations where the government takes leadership, many of the same principles can be applied in support of Government-led emergency or crisis sectoral coordination mechanisms. For these, international humanitarian support can augment national capacity, underpinned by the principles of the cluster approach.<sup>9</sup>

The following table compares coordination arrangements in different settings:

| Cluster and Sector Coordination and Government Leadership               |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coordination Mechanism                                                  | Emergency Phase                                                                                              | Recovery Phase                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Government coordination capacity is adequate and not constrained</b> | Government provides leadership. International partners may reinforce the Government's coordination capacity. | Government leadership continues. Humanitarian coordination structures may transition to recovery and to development structures. International actors withdraw or support recovery and help to prepare for future crises. |
| <b>Government coordination capacity is limited or constrained</b>       | Clusters are activated where needed. Where appropriate and possible, co-leadership with                      | Clusters are de-activated or devolve to national emergency or recovery and development coordination structures,                                                                                                          |

<sup>8</sup> IASC [Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level \(revised July 2015\)](#), Section 6: Sharing Leadership, page 21.

<sup>9</sup> IASC (2015) IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level.

|                                                            |                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Government bodies and NGO partners is strongly encouraged. | where appropriate and possible. Government coordination is strengthened, where appropriate and possible. |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Co-coordination is to be differentiated with co-leadership. “Co-leadership” arrangements between the CLA and national/local authorities only, may be adopted, and will mean that both the CLA and national/local authorities are overall responsible and accountable for the vision and governance of the Cluster, regardless of the chosen co-coordination arrangements. Indeed, co-leadership arrangements do not preclude in any way the establishment of a co-coordination between the CLA and an NGO as a standard way of working of GPC field operations.

## Roles of the Protection Cluster: Setting Up Cluster Co-Coordination

### Establishing Co-Coordination

The establishment of shared leadership should be assessed in consultation with the Global Protection Cluster. When sharing leadership with the government, this should be agreed by the CLA with relevant government authorities.

For NGO shared leadership, in some responses this is actively promoted by the HC and HCT. In others, Cluster members might approach the Cluster with the suggestion, or the CLA and Cluster Coordinator might decide to actively seek to set up shared leadership/co-coordination for the Cluster. The selection process for a co-coordinating NGO should be transparent and consultative. It might include an ‘expression of interest’ for nominations, voting by cluster members, or consultations with the HC/HCT.

The following criteria will be prioritised when selecting/electing a co-coordinating NGO: operational and technical relevance in the emergency; capacity to provide appropriately experienced staff; commitment to contribute to coordination requirements consistently; demonstrated capacity to contribute strategically; complementarity with the CLA.

### Drafting an MOU

An MoU (memorandum of understanding) between the CLA and co-coordinating NGO must be developed and agreed between the two entities, defining respective roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. The MoU should be adopted in line with the standards and minimum expectations defined by the GPC and highlighted in the GPC MoU Protection Cluster Template.

Senior leadership of both the CLA and co-coordinating NGO should be actively involved in the development of the MoU, to ensure ownership and engagement throughout the duration of the co-coordination arrangement. Once the MoU has been agreed upon, senior leadership of the CLA and co-coordinating NGO, as well as the cluster coordinator and co-coordinator, will discuss the MoU to ensure a common understanding among all parties. In the event of turnover in the coordinator positions, the MoU shall be shared and discussed with new cluster (co)coordinators. Negotiation of the MoU is essential to establish clarity on common expectations and a shared understanding of what the co-coordinating role entails, how the coordinators relate to one another, and to provide means for ongoing coordination and joint monitoring of the arrangement by each party.

**FIND:** MoU guidance and an MoU template are available in the GPC Co-Coordination Guidance [here](#).

## Capacities, Resources & Funding

Effective coordination requires people, skills, time, and resources – which applies to government bodies co-leading a cluster, and NGOs acting as co-coordinating NGO. Providing full- or part-time staff to a Cluster requires funding. Cluster Coordinators sometimes might need to advocate for this, in support of Cluster co-coordinating NGO. For NGOs, some humanitarian donors support coordination and can include specific funding for cluster co-coordination and sub-national coordination. Depending on the context, the HC/HCT may help mobilize funding if NGO co-coordination is an HCT priority.

## Localisation and Shared Leadership

In line with Grand Bargain and IASC commitments on localization, wherever feasible, a co-coordinating agency of the Protection Cluster will be a national NGO.

### Tips for Localisation in Cluster Leadership

- ✓ Consider options for national/local NGO or government shared leadership through co-coordination arrangements at sub-national as well as national level.
- ✓ Consider a phased approach of NGO co-coordination taking advantage of institutional expertise (e.g. establishing INGO co-coordination during first phases of an emergency response then transitioning to NNGO co-coordination).
- ✓ Ensure NNGO staff are fully equipped and briefed on the cluster system (e.g. plan trainings or induction briefings).
- ✓ Advocate for financial resources needed.
- ✓ Support institutional understanding (e.g. ensure line managers understand staffs' coordination role).

Read more about Localisation in **Chapter 11: [Cross-Cutting Issues](#) (Section 11.3: Localization)** in the Protection Field Coordination Toolkit.

## Establishing Successful Relationships

- ✓ Ensure the setup is one of partnership, not delegation, particularly for NGO co-coordination:
  - An NGO-appointed Co-Coordinator is not a deputy to the CLA-appointed Cluster Coordinator, and coordination responsibility should be shared between them.
  - Particularly bear in mind this dynamic if the Cluster co-coordinating NGO is new to cluster co-coordination, and for national NGOs.
- ✓ Shared leadership of a Cluster is most effective where the co-coordinators can work jointly, rather than sharply dividing responsibilities.
- ✓ When establishing government shared leadership arrangements, a division of responsibilities between staff might make sense and if so, should be included in a CLA-government MoU.

## Other Contribution to Coordination Capacity

Aside from establishing shared leadership through co-coordinating NGO, other coordination capacity can be provided to Protection Clusters by partners through either staff secondment or other resources.

Example of staff secondments from Cluster members to a Cluster coordination team include:

- IM or Assessment Officers
- Technical Coordinators
- Capacity-Building Officers



Example of other support activities from Cluster members include:

- Running trainings or other capacity-building initiatives
- Consultancies

## 1.5 Coordination Team Planning

### Coordination Team Positions

The staffing structure of the Protection Cluster depends on the magnitude of the crisis, but at a minimum, any activated cluster must include a national Cluster Coordinator and IM Officer, provided by the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) within the CLA's commitments<sup>10</sup>. When applicable, the co-coordinating NGO should also make at least one Cluster Co-Coordinator and, as necessary and possible, other staff available.

Other positions that have been included in Protection Cluster coordination teams include Sub-National Coordinator, Sub-National Co-Chair/Co-Coordinator, Sub-National IM Officer, area focal point, Technical Specialist, Capacity-Building Officer, Assessment Specialist, and more.

**Staff can be provided to Cluster coordination teams by:**

- Cluster Lead Agency
- Cluster Co-Coordinating NGO
- Cluster members who wish to support coordination capacity (e.g. for technical support such as leading Technical Working Groups, assessment / information management, sub-national coordination)
- Standby rosters, on request.

**KEY TOOLKIT GUIDANCE:** See [1.10 Key Resources and Tools for global generic ToRs](#) and example ToRs to adapt. For Cluster Co-Coordinator ToRs, use the [NGO Co-Coordination Manual](#) template.

**The following must be in place:**

- All staff positions should have a ToR.
  - UNHCR as CLA has standard ToRs for national Coordinator and IM Officer positions
  - For other positions you may need to draft ToRs with the contributing organization
- Organogram & contacts list for the coordination team should be disseminated to Cluster members and available online.
- For multi-organization teams, good communication, clear lines of accountability and reporting, and defined roles and responsibilities and limits of responsibilities should be agreed.

### Role of the Coordination Team

#### Responsibilities of the main functions are:

##### Coordinator

A person appointed by the CLA to coordinate the day-to-day work of the cluster, including ensuring the fulfilment of the cluster's six core functions and accountability to affected people. The responsibilities of the coordinator are detailed in ToRs. S/he reports to the CLA's Country Representative and is accountable to cluster members and affected people. While the CLA may provide additional staffing, this dedicated position – along with the

<sup>10</sup> [IOM Emergency Manual \(older alternative\)](#) & [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#), both available online

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                | IM Officer – is one of two minimum staff requirements of the CLA and is fundamental to the effective functioning of the cluster.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Information Management Officer</b>          | A person appointed by the CLA to establish, operate and maintain information systems for strategic and operational decision-making, including cluster member reporting, data analysis, gap identification, severity mapping, cluster member mapping and other cluster information products. The IM officer reports to the cluster coordinator. While the CLA may provide additional staffing, this dedicated position – along with the cluster coordinator – is one of two minimum staff requirements of the CLA and is fundamental to effective functioning of the cluster.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Co-Coordinator</b>                          | A person appointed by the Cluster Co-Coordinating NGO to support the day-to-day work of the cluster in collaboration with the Cluster Coordinator. The Co-Coordinator reports to the Country Representative/Director (or delegate). The responsibilities of the Co-Coordinator, which is normally a dedicated function, are detailed in ToRs. The relationship (and reporting lines) between the Cluster Coordinator and Co-Coordinator varies among CLAs and Co-Coordinating NGO; it is recognized as good practice that the division of responsibilities and ways of working between the Coordinator and Co-Coordinator are defined in a joint workplan and are governed by the Principles of Partnership. It also is recognized as good practice that the Co-Coordinator is officer-in-charge on response coordination matters when the coordinator is absent; administrative and other CLA-specific matters are handled by staff from the CLA. |
| <b>Sub-National Coordinator or Focal Point</b> | A person identified by the CLA or by co-coordinating NGO in consultation with the CLA to coordinate the work of and/or provide information management support to a cluster in a specific subnational location. S/he reports to the hiring organization and on cluster issues, to the national-level cluster coordinator. A subnational coordinator or focal point can be a full-time dedicated position or a part-time role carried out by staff based in the area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Upholding Neutrality of the Coordination Team

The essence of cluster coordination is anchored around providing neutral and impartial coordination, and being able to operate independently from, but with strong support of, the CLA and Co-Coordinating NGO.

Regardless of which organization employs coordination team staff and whether it is at global, regional, national or subnational levels, all members of the team have an over-riding responsibility to the Cluster members and must act as a neutral body working for the best interest of the Protection Cluster as a whole. Cluster staff must not prioritise the interests of the CLA or Co-Coordinating NGO or prioritize the interests of UN agencies over NGOs or vice versa. If you have worked in an operational role for your organization before taking on Cluster responsibilities, it might feel difficult at first to switch to feeling a primary responsibility to the Cluster rather than to your organization!

### Structures that promote neutrality of a Cluster coordination team include:

- Ensuring staff are dedicated to coordination with no operational responsibilities, avoiding double-hatting especially at national level wherever possible.
- The Cluster Coordinator and Co-Coordinator report directly to their organization's head of country office (e.g. to the Country Representation / Chief of Mission), not to an operational manager.
- The CLA and Co-Coordinating NGO should each be represented in Protection Cluster meetings and the SAG by an operational staff member not by the coordination team. Coordination staff should not be expected to represent their organizations externally.

- The coordination team sits together in an appropriate and well-equipped office space.

**Practical day-to-day actions a coordination team can take include:**

- Always using Protection Cluster templates, logos, and branding not organizational branding (or promote use of cluster partner logos in appropriate products).
- All products (IM, communication, advocacy products, etc.) should reflect the inputs and interests of the Protection Cluster as a whole and not focus on or privilege the CLA or co-coordinating NGO above other Cluster members.
- Listing all Cluster members on products where appropriate.
- Not wearing visibility items from the CLA/co-coordinating NGO (except for security reasons).
- Hosting meetings in neutral locations that are convenient and accessible for all Cluster members.

## Double-Hatting

“Double-hatting” is where a person performs a cluster role alongside an organizational operational role. The Global Protection Cluster recommends that Cluster coordination staff at national level should be dedicated full-time to the Cluster. However, at sub-national or area-level having full-time coordination staff might not be necessary or feasible. For example, a protection programme manager might double-hat as a Protection Cluster area focal point, with 50% of their time dedicated to coordination and 50% to the implementation of their organization’s programmes. Double hatting should not compromise the neutrality of the person when they represent the cluster.

### What are potential problems with double hatting?

- Lack of clear differentiation between Cluster and organizational functions and responsibilities might lead to competing conflict of interest between the organization the staff is recruited by and the cluster.
- Perception that the CLA or co-coordinating NGO interests are being prioritized over protection partner interests, resulting in distrust and reduced engagement of protection partners.
- Lack of dedicated time or focus on coordination activities.

### If a position has to be ‘double-hatted’, how can it be most effective?

- Specific coordination responsibilities should be included in the staff member’s ToR and performance appraisal, agreed by their direct line manager, including time to be allocated to their coordination tasks and how lines of reporting and accountability function.
- Ensure double-hatted coordination staff have a good understanding of the Cluster approach, and how they can aim for impartiality in their Cluster role.
- Ensure line managers have a good understanding of the Cluster approach and the importance of Cluster representation being perceived as neutral, so they are able to support and create space for the staff member’s coordination responsibilities.
- Be very clear when the staff member is representing the Cluster on behalf of protection partners, and when they are representing their organization.
- Another person should represent the CLA/co-coordinating NGO at meetings, where possible.
- If funding allocations are being discussed, another person must represent the CLA/co-coordinating NGO to avoid conflict of interest.

When a Cluster has shared leadership with government authorities at national or sub-national level and a government staff member double-hats, some (although, perhaps not all) of the above considerations will also apply. The implications and practicalities of double-hatting should be discussed between the CLA and

government body during the establishment of shared leadership, to ensure a mutual understanding of the expectations of staff performing coordination roles.

## 1.6 How to Be an Effective Cluster Coordinator

An effective Cluster Coordinator and Co-Coordinator are important for the success of the Cluster. It might be useful to think of a cluster coordination team as *service providers* – tasked with delivery of the Cluster workplan, working for the benefit of Cluster members.

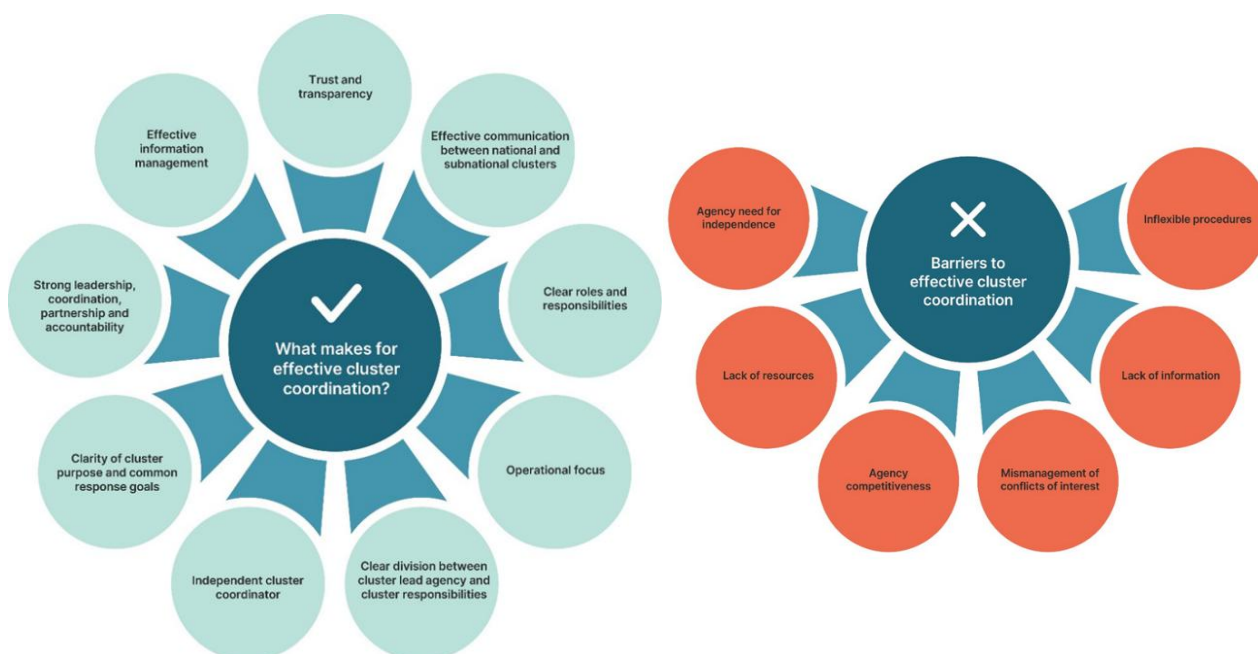
**Some key aspects to consider:**

- **Be inclusive:** identify, engage with, and involve all relevant Protection actors: UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs, local actors, government authorities, donors, private sector, academia, & affected communities.
- **Ensure** all partners have something to gain from being a Protection Cluster member.
- **Respect** differing priorities and mandates.

**If you are interested in thinking more about what makes clusters effective, see:**

- ALNAP's study on [Exploring Coordination in Humanitarian Clusters](#).
- Part II of the [IDP Handbook](#) covers Attitudes and Skills required of humanitarian and human rights actors.
- GPC [Functional Framework](#) for Protection Cluster Coordinators.

### What Makes Clusters Work?



**Source of graphics:** [Global Health Cluster \(2020\) Health Cluster Guide – A Practical Handbook, p.101 & 102.](#)

## Skills for Cluster Coordination

A Cluster Coordinator or Co-Coordinator is most successful in getting Cluster members to agree and implement aligned activities when they:

- ✓ Are clear about their role
- ✓ Have 'soft skills' – relationship-building, facilitation, team building
- ✓ Actively use their strong communication skills
- ✓ Are seen as proactive and impartial, and are able to play the role of mediator
- ✓ Have support from a coordination team (IMs, sub-national, etc.) and Cluster members
- ✓ Actively work to develop relationships with Cluster members and other key stakeholders (and ideally do not rotate frequently)
- ✓ Have strong technical and context knowledge
- ✓ Take leadership and actively work to build consensus among Cluster members
- ✓ Are able to operate in a neutral manner and avoid any potential conflict of interest between the CLA and the Cluster coordination daily roles and responsibilities

## Building Relationships & Consensus

Taking the time to proactively build relationships with Cluster members and other key stakeholders is vital for the success of a coordination team – encouraging individuals and organizations to actively engage with the Cluster work and toward common goals.

**FIND OUT MORE:** For reflections on attitudes and skills, including on being a team player, decision making, communication, problem solving and negotiation, see Part II Attitudes and Skills in the [Handbook for the Protection of IDPs](#)

It can be easier to build stronger relationships internally within your own organization, especially if you have worked for them in an operational role before, but this makes it more important to actively pursue relationship-building with other Cluster members. You might need to take a different approach to relationship building with UN/INGO Cluster members, national/local NGOs, and government counterparts. Plus, don't forget other key stakeholders (e.g., protection donors, other clusters, and inter-cluster staff).

## Tips for effective relationship-building

- Be active rather than passive – meeting people individually can be very effective
- Make time to speak more informally with Cluster members and government counterparts (e.g., using the time before or after meetings)
- Visit protection partner programmes to increase knowledge of the programmes and context
- Be sensitive to power dynamics:
  - Visit organizations in their own offices rather than UN offices
  - Ensure visits to programmes don't feel like Cluster members are being monitored
  - If the CLA (or other UN agency/INGO) fund implementing partners, engage with the organizations directly *as Cluster members* not just through the UN agency
- Build trust by:
  - Being open and transparent

- Not assuming you have the answers to all issues
- Being prepared to take criticism and hear things you might not like
- Actively listening, and asking questions
- Accepting when you have made mistakes, and rectifying them
- Remaining approachable and keeping in touch with individuals and organizations
- Being inclusive, and not privileging your own organization
- Seek to understand partners' expectations and constraints

### Tips for consensus-building

Establishing common goals and joint strategies can be a difficult task when organizations have different approaches and opinions!

- Take time – set up bilateral and informal discussions as well as meetings
- Encourage equal participation and openness
- Limit your own ideas and ask questions
- Ensure discussion is evidence-based
- Encourage discussion of different positions and underlying interests
- Identify and grow areas of agreement – the aspects on which the group agrees

### Meeting Management and Facilitation

Cluster meetings are a main point of interface with Cluster members and should be productive and inclusive.

**What makes a good meeting?** (relevant also to workshops!):

- Provide interpretation and translation if necessary
- Use a neutral venue that is convenient and equally accessible to all Cluster members
- Ensure that Cluster members can contribute to the meeting agenda
- Begin with a purpose and with a clear agenda so everyone knows why they are there, for how long, and what they need to accomplish
- Encourage open discussion, and encourage all participants to contribute
- Press for closure of each agenda item – agree action points of who will do what and by when (getting people to commit publicly to action points is a powerful tool!)
- Make sure that information about meetings, minutes, decisions, and current Protection issues is readily available to all actors
- Discuss sensitive issues bilaterally

### Cluster Administration Documents

Please reach out to the GPC if you require any templates or example documents for cluster administration. This includes, but isn't limited to, ToRs, day –to-day admin (presentations/meeting note templates), or documents that are required to run HPC, Pooled Fund or CCPM exercises.

## 1.7 Sub-National Coordination

Subnational Coordination is where there is decentralized coordination and operational decisions, to ensure the response is the closest possible to the beneficiaries and affected areas. It is established on the basis of



operational needs and should be deactivated as soon as those needs are met or when local coordination capacity is adequate

The overall role of the sub-national Protection Cluster Coordinator is similar to that of the national level Coordinator and will support the 6+1 core functions. However, subnational coordinators can have more of an operational function. A subnational coordinator

- Ensures linkages between the national and sub-national level
- Supports field level operational coordination – including the response to specific incidents and events
- Supports the meaningful participation of local partners, and local authorities where relevant
- Provides timely and relevant field level context and protection analysis

Subnational coordination systems do not need to directly mirror national level coordination; they can be adapted to be more locally relevant.

Some examples of when it might be necessary to have sub-national coordination:

- ✓ If responses take place in remote areas (e.g. South Sudan)
- ✓ If response area is very large (e.g. DRC)
- ✓ If decision making needs to be decentralised

While national cluster lead agency is often the coordinator at the subnational level, this is not always the case. In some locations, an NGO or different agency is better placed to be lead.

The recommendations on the simplification of the Protection architecture - endorsed by Protection Cluster and AoR lead agencies in December 2024 – notes that efforts should be made to consolidate sub-national coordination. (recommendation 2.a.)

## Leadership at a Subnational Level

A range of diverse mechanisms were in place at the subnational level to ensure coordination and response solutions to localized contexts, providing both sectoral and strategic coordination and ensuring linkages with decision-making entities at the national level. These included Area HCTs, subnational ICCGs, clusters/sectors and other operational coordination mechanisms.

## Training for subnational coordination teams

The GPC has developed a training package that focuses on learning for subnational protection coordinators or protection coordination focal points. This includes a learning needs assessment. This is available upon request from the GPC.

# 1.8 Inter-Cluster Coordination

## Participation in Inter-Sector Coordination Mechanisms

As a Protection Cluster team, you should be proactively participating in the inter-cluster or inter-sector coordination mechanisms. Depending on the country setup, these might include:

- National Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG/ICWG) (national Cluster Coordinator & Co-Coordinator)
- Sub-national ICCG/ICWGs (Sub-National Coordinator & Co-Coordinator)
- Area coordination mechanisms (area focal points)

- IM Working Groups (Cluster IM team)
- Relevant thematic working groups and taskforces e.g. Communication with Communities or AAP Working Group, Cash Working Group, Gender in Humanitarian Action, PSEA, etc.

Attending different inter-sector mechanisms requires good communication within the whole coordination team, to share discussions and decisions taken for consistent representation of the Cluster.

Where clusters are activated, inter-cluster coordination is supported by OCHA, in support of the HC, including facilitation of inter-cluster meetings, assistance to clusters to deliver parts of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, and providing inter-cluster information management tools.

**FIND OUT MORE:** See [Standard Terms of Reference for Inter-Cluster \(Sector\) Coordination Groups](#) and a list of OCHA's inter-cluster coordination responsibilities is in the [IASC Reference Module on Cluster Coordination](#).

## Collaboration with Other Clusters

In addition to participating in formal and informal inter-cluster mechanisms, you should also aim to build relationships and collaborate directly with other clusters/sectors. Protection is interconnected with all areas of humanitarian action and requires Coordinators to have good working relationships with other Clusters – to be able to raise, discuss, and address issues that can't be resolved and establish joint operational approaches and strategies as needed. It also requires good working relations with OCHA to ensure clear and common understanding on roles and responsibilities.

In addition to maintaining ongoing working relationships with other Clusters/Sectors, you will likely need to collaborate on specific topics – ongoing or for a one-off piece of work. For example: collaboration with the CCCM Cluster to monitor protection incidents in camps on an ongoing basis; drafting a guidance note with the Education Cluster for partners on working with IDPs temporarily living in schools; joint advocacy document on relocation.

CLAs and co-coordinating NGO often expect the Clusters/Sectors they lead to work closely with each other. This can be very beneficial for a protection response where, for example, CCCM and Protection Clusters, or Protection and Shelter Sectors are encouraged to work together. However, don't forget to also build relationships with other sectors.

## Collaboration with Other Coordination Bodies

The Protection Cluster will engage with other coordination bodies, including humanitarian coordination, development coordination and peace-security coordination.

Protection Cluster coordinators should regularly map the presence of other coordination bodies such as: Access Working Group, Civil-Military Coordination, Area-Based Coordination mechanisms, thematic working groups (e.g. AAP/CwC/PSEA), development coordination mechanisms and UN mission coordination structures (if relevant). These are all important forums to engage with to advance protection outcomes and build bridges towards transition and durable solutions where relevant.

## 1.9 Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM)

Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) is an important exercise, inviting Cluster partners to give feedback on the cluster's performance and agreeing ways to improve areas that do not score well. It is required for all clusters at least once a year. In some operations, the HCT and ICCG give a timeframe for the

CCPM to be carried out. If this isn't the case, the process can be initiated by the Cluster directly, in agreement with the CLA. You can discuss this with your Global Protection Cluster focal point.

## Four Steps of CCPM

The CCPM requires clusters to assess their performance against the “6+1” core cluster functions and accountability to affected people. The process enables all cluster partners and coordinators to identify strengths and weaknesses of performance and paths to improvement. The GPC supports this process through the development of relevant materials (including survey) and information package for cluster partners.

**There are four steps to conduct a Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring exercise:**

### 1. Planning

- The GPC initiates the annual CCPM process and circulates up to date guidance and information on the processes and timelines.
- For a whole-country process initiated by the HCT, the planning should be done by the ICCG.
- If initiating the CCPM just for the Protection Cluster: you should brief the CLA on the proposed process. You might wish to engage the Cluster SAG to input to or endorse the process as well as the feedback questionnaire.
- Communicate with partners about the purpose and steps.

### 2. CCPM survey

- The GPC shares the survey template with cluster coordination teams to measure the “6+1” cluster functions.
- Survey data should be collected anonymously, inviting feedback from partners at national and sub-national level.
- The Cluster team should analyse and score responses and produce a preliminary report.

#### Tips for Localization

- ✓ Translate the questionnaire and reports.
- ✓ Include appropriate measures of progress on localization in the CCPM survey.
- ✓ Separate (disaggregate) analysis to explore any differences in perceptions between international and national actors.

Use the [Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localization in Humanitarian Coordination](#), Section G Sample Documents – tool 1 for example questions measuring progress on principles of partnership, useful to consider for inclusion in CCPM survey tools.

### 3. Analysis and action planning

- The findings and preliminary report should be discussed with Cluster partners – in a meeting, or workshop – to identify any mitigating factors and agree specific actions that could be taken to improve performance if necessary.
- Cluster team should then finalize and share a Performance Report and Action Plan with the SAG, CLAs, ICCG/OCHA and GPC.
- The GPC will share a power point and report template, for reference.

#### Tips – Questions for Discussion during CCPM workshop

1. Was there any confusion/lack clarity in the survey? *Check particularly those questions with high level of 'do not know'.*
2. What are we doing well (good practice/achievements)? *See particularly 'satisfactory' & 'good' scores.*
3. What need to improve (challenges & constraints)? *See particularly 'weak' & 'unsatisfactory' scores*
4. How did HNO/HRP process go? How useful is the strategic plan in supporting the response?
5. How is cross cluster/AoR coordination & collaboration?
6. How is national/sub-national coordination; any issue with specific sub-national coordination hub?
7. How are local partners included in coordination and decision-making (e.g. SAG)?
8. Do we need to adjust any scores (up or down)?
9. What are possible priorities & actions to be taken? *SAG to work on draft list of priority actions & support needed.*

#### 4. Follow up and monitoring

- If a whole-country CCPM is being conducted, the ICCG reviews all reports to identify any common weaknesses, and reports and action plans are presented to the HCT.
- The Cluster coordination team should discuss the CCPM outcomes and Action Plan with the GPC, particularly on any recommendations for joint action.
- The Cluster coordination team should monitor the implementation of its Action Plan, keeping the CLA and co-coordinating NGO and Cluster members updated on progress.

See the GCCG's [Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring Guidance Note](#) for supplementary guidance.

## 1.10 Key Resources and Tools

| Title                                                                                                                               | Type                  | Language                                            | Year         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level                                                                     | Guidance              | <a href="#">ENG, KOR, FR</a><br><a href="#">ESP</a> | 2015<br>2012 |
| GCCG Country-level Cluster Terms and Definitions                                                                                    | Terms and Definitions | <a href="#">ENG</a>                                 | 2023         |
| OCHA - Standard Terms of Reference for Inter-Cluster (Sector) Coordination Groups                                                   | Guidance, Manual      | <a href="#">ENG</a>                                 | 2023         |
| Cluster Coordination: Information on the Cluster Approach                                                                           | Information           | <a href="#">ENG</a>                                 | n/a          |
| Monitoring the Quality of Protection Programmes and Services – GPC                                                                  | Guidance Note         | <a href="#">ENG</a><br><i>Upon request</i>          | 2024         |
| IASC Leadership in Humanitarian Action – Handbook for Humanitarian Coordinators                                                     | Handbook, Guidance    | <a href="#">ENG</a>                                 | 2024         |
| UNHCR Emergency Handbook, sections on International Humanitarian and Development Coordination Architecture; Cluster Approach (IASC) | Handbook              | <a href="#">ENG</a>                                 | Online       |

|                                                                                                                                                     |                      |                                            |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------|
| UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)                                                                                                              | Guidance, Model      | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | Online |
| IOM Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster                | Guidelines           | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2017   |
| ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work 2024: Fourth edition                                                                                | Handbook             | <a href="#">ENG, FRA, ESP, RUS, AR</a>     | 2024   |
| <b>Localisation and Government Engagement</b>                                                                                                       |                      |                                            |        |
| Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on working with National Authorities – IASC 2011                                                     | Operational Guidance | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2011   |
| Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localisation in Humanitarian Coordination, IASC                                                                             | Guidance, Toolkit    | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2022   |
| Protocol of Engagement between Local Governments and Humanitarian Actors                                                                            | Guidance Note        | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2019   |
| IASC Principles of Partnership - Global Humanitarian Platform                                                                                       | Statement            | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2007   |
| ICVA Principles of Partnership: A Statement of Commitment                                                                                           | Statement            | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | -      |
| Checklist for induction and onboarding new coordination group members from Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localization in Humanitarian Coordination – CCCM | Guidance, Checklist  | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2022   |
| <b>Terms of Reference and Co-Coordination</b>                                                                                                       |                      |                                            |        |
| IASC Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Coordinators at the Country Level                                                                       | Operational Guidance | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2010   |
| IASC Generic Terms of Reference for Sector / Cluster at Country Level                                                                               | Operational Guidance | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2014   |
| Protection Subnational Coordination Terms of Reference                                                                                              | ToR                  | <a href="#">ENG</a><br><i>Upon Request</i> | *      |
| GPC Guidance Note on Protection Cluster Co-Coordination (includes MoU template)                                                                     | Guidance             | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2023   |
| NGO Co-Coordination Manual, NRC                                                                                                                     | Guidance             | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2013   |
| Tripartite MoU: UN, NGO, INGO co-coordination                                                                                                       | ToR                  | FR                                         |        |
| <b>Coordination Skills</b>                                                                                                                          |                      |                                            |        |
| Leadership in Humanitarian Action Handbook for Humanitarian Coordinators (HC/RC)                                                                    | Handbook             | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2024   |
| GPC Functional Framework for Protection Cluster Coordinators                                                                                        | Handbook             | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | 2022   |
| Monitoring the Quality of Protection Programmes and Services – GPC                                                                                  | Guidance Note        | <a href="#">ENG</a><br><i>Upon request</i> | 2024   |
| Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons - Part II Attitudes and Skills                                                          | Handbook             | <a href="#">ENG, ESP, ARA, FRE</a>         | 2010   |
| CCCM Cluster Tips for Running Successful Meetings                                                                                                   | Tipsheet             | <a href="#">ENG</a>                        | -      |

|                                                                                                          |                      |                                      |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| WHO Health Cluster Guide: A Practical Handbook (Global Health Cluster)                                   | Handbook             | <a href="#">ENG, FRE</a>             | 2020 |
| Exploring Coordination in Humanitarian Clusters - ALNAP (Clarke PK, Campbell L.) (2015)                  | Study / Report       | <a href="#">ENG</a>                  | 2015 |
| GPC Subnational Coordination Training Package                                                            | Training Package     | ENG<br><i>Upon Request</i>           | -    |
| <b>CCPM</b>                                                                                              |                      |                                      |      |
| Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring –IASC/GCCG                                                   | Guidance Note        | <a href="#">ENG</a>                  | 2014 |
| Example CCPM survey, report and PowerPoint                                                               | Example              | ENG, FRA, ESP<br><i>Upon Request</i> | -    |
| Example CCPM Report                                                                                      | Example              | ENG, FRA, ESP<br><i>Upon Request</i> | -    |
| <b>NEXUS Coordination</b>                                                                                |                      |                                      |      |
| IASC Checklist: Advancing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach through IASC Global Clusters | Guidance - Checklist | <a href="#">ENG, FRE</a>             | 2023 |

## Protection Field Coordination Toolkit – Overview of Chapters

Visit the [main toolkit landing page](#) or navigate directly to the chapters below to access more resources and information on the Protection Cluster's role in the following areas:

### Protection Field Coordination Toolkit – Overview of Chapters

#### Chapter 1: Humanitarian Coordination Overview

- Coordination models for internal displacement, refugee response and mixed situations
- Cluster Activation Criteria and Processes

#### Chapter 2: Humanitarian Programme Cycle

- Elements / Principles of the HPC and the Role of the Cluster
- Flash Appeals and Pooled Funds
- Integration cross-cutting issues and the Centrality of Protection into the HPC

#### Chapter 3: Internal Displacement

- Internal displacement and the needs of IDPs.
- Legal frameworks and displacement

#### Chapter 4: Protection in Armed Conflict

- International Law/Principles
- Humanitarian protection and Protection of Civilians (PoC).
- Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination

#### Chapter 5: Centrality of Protection

- The Protection Cluster's responsibilities in CoP
- The difference between mainstreaming, integration and the centrality of protection.
- IASC processes and HCT benchmarks

#### Chapter 6: Climate, Disaster, and Sudden Onset Emergencies

- Terminology and definitions in climate and disasters.
- Responding to sudden onset emergencies
- Actions that can be taken after a sudden onset shock (day 1-5)
- Climate and disaster preparedness and response.

#### Chapter 7: Durable Solutions

- Global frameworks guiding Durable Solutions
- Supporting durable solutions at strategic and operational levels.
- The GPC Durable Solutions Guidance for Protection Clusters

#### Chapter 8: Cluster Transition, Deactivation and Reform

- Criteria for cluster deactivation and transition
- Transition processes
- Humanitarian reform initiatives
- Area-based coordination

#### Chapter 9: Advocacy and Communication

- Developing advocacy strategies and action plans
- Preparing briefings to ICCG/HCT and engaging donors
- Leveraging human rights mechanisms
- Communication products and media engagement

#### Chapter 10: Data Responsibility and Safe Information Management

- Principles of data safeguarding, management and sharing
- Data responsibility in humanitarian action
- Safe and effective data handling

#### Chapter 11: Cross-Cutting Issues

- Age, Gender, Diversity and Disability Inclusion
- MHPSS
- AAP
- PSEA
- Protection Mainstreaming

#### Chapter 12: Understanding Protection Programmatic Approaches and Interventions

- Locally Led Responses
- Community Based Protection
- Case Management
- Service Mapping and Referrals
- Legal Aid, Law and Policy
- Cash and Protection
- Humanitarian Negotiations
- Anti-Trafficking
- Mobile and Rapid Protection Responses