

Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action (CLARE)

UNICEF EVALUATION OFFICE

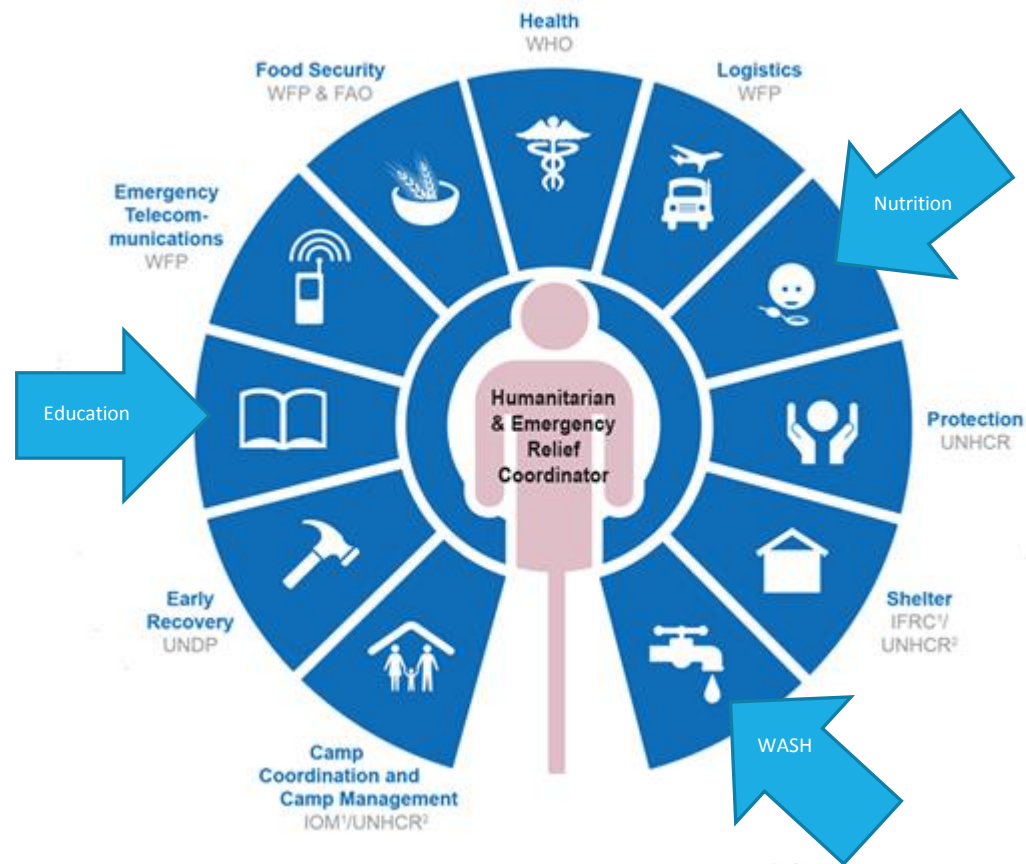
PRESENTATION AT EXECUTIVE BOARD INFORMAL BRIEFING MEETING

MAY 28, 2014

Clusters in Humanitarian Action

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) initiated cluster approach in 2005 for better coordination during emergencies in the context of the broader humanitarian reform.
- The aim of initiating a cluster approach were to:
 1. enhance coordination during emergencies and improve capacity, predictability, accountability and leadership; and
 2. provide a clear point of contact and the lead agency to be accountable for adequate and appropriate humanitarian assistance.
- IASC designates a global cluster lead agency for each sector

UNICEF's Lead Role in Clusters



- There are nine sectoral clusters and two common service clusters
- UNICEF is the designated lead of Nutrition, WASH and co-lead of Education
- Within the Protection Cluster, UNICEF is the focal point agency for two areas of responsibility

Evaluation of UNICEF's Leadership Role in Clusters: Purpose and Methods

- The evaluation sought to answer the questions:
 - How well does UNICEF carry out its cluster lead agency (CLA) role?
 - what should UNICEF do to implement its CLA role better in the future?
- The evaluation assessed objectively the performance of UNICEF as a cluster lead agency through use of the OECD/DAC criteria (relevance and appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability).

Findings: External Coordination Performance

- In general, UNICEF's cluster leadership was consistently rated well by partners.
- UNICEF-led clusters are having a positive effect on geographic (establishing sub-national coordination structures) and thematic coverage through research and advocacy particularly in education cluster and gender based violence.
- UNICEF was not perceived to effectively represent cluster members within country Humanitarian Coordination Teams

Findings: Internal Cluster Lead Agency Role Performance

- The consolidation of global cluster staff under global cluster coordination unit is beginning to yield positive results
- Role of regional offices remains unclear despite the regional office being the formal accountability link between CO and HQ.

Findings: Human Resources Performance

- Surge capacity and recruitment systems for clusters have improved since 2010 as evidenced from humanitarian evaluation findings.
- However, the human resources approach is fragmented:
 - No overarching strategy
 - lack of career path in coordination
 - “double-hatting” reduces effectiveness – the practice of performing several functions during active clusters.

Findings: Scope and Boundary

- Clusters are increasingly filling gaps beyond emergencies coordination and many are currently operating as long term sectoral development coordination mechanism. This has significantly affected UNICEF's ability to perform well as a capable and predictable cluster lead agency.
- The role of clusters in national capacity building and transfer of skills remains limited and unclear.

Cost effectiveness and efficiency

- Strong perception of value by partners and staff that the outcomes from the cluster justify the investment made by UNICEF
- Cross-cluster coordination was found to be insufficient
- Integrated programming approaches remain the exception, not the rule

Recommendations

- R1: Develop a “cluster-ready” initiative to increase country office preparedness for cluster activation in high-risk countries.
- R2: Strengthen UNICEF-wide management systems to support the CLA role, including strengthening the role of regional offices and better connecting country representatives to a global CLA strategic management structure.
- R3: Develop an integrated strategy for human resources surge capacity and UNICEF coordination staff development.

Recommendations

- R4: Increase coherence (interpretation and articulation) and then fidelity (understanding and consistent application) through UNICEF CLA policy and practice.
- R5: Mitigate the use of clusters in inappropriate scenarios by developing models and tools for non-cluster coordination, including transition points for country offices, and establish clarity on the role of clusters, if any, for national capacity-building to ensure efficient and fit-for-purpose coordination approaches.