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Addressing Integrated Coordination in Food Security Crises:

A Brief Assessment of the Role, Mandate, and Challenges of the Global Food Security Cluster

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
ALRMP	Arid Lands Resource Management Project
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CNSA	Coordination Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire (National Coordination for Food Security in Haiti)
CRC	Crisis Response Center
CWGER	Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery
DCO	District Coordinating Officer
EFSA	Emergency Food Security Assessment
EHAP	Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAC	Food Aid Convention
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
GFSC	Global Food Security Cluster
GOH	Government of Haiti
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HRR	Humanitarian Response Review
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

IRC	International Rescue Committee
KFSM	Kenya Food Security Meeting
KFSSG	Kenya Food Security Steering Group
KRCS	Kenya Red Cross Society
MCRAM	Multi-Cluster Rapid Assessment Mission
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MT	Metric Ton
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) formally launched the global Food Security Cluster (FSC) as the UN's global mechanism for coordinating food security responses in emergencies worldwide. Prior to the creation of the global FSC, elements of food security had been addressed within the cluster system at the country level on an *ad hoc* basis and leadership had not been designated for integrated food security response at the global level. The main objective of the global FSC is to provide leadership, guidance and support to country-level clusters in order to improve food security responses in emergencies. The creation of the global FSC coincides with a period in which the number of food security actors continues to grow, the operating environment has become more complex, and the range of responses requires greater levels of skill in analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring. All
of this underscores the need for greater coordination.

This paper, commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), briefly summarizes the mandate of the newly formed global FSC; presents an analysis of the major issues and challenges it faces; and provides recommendations to donors and the global FSC for possible ways to address these issues. The paper draws on interviews with key informants and four individual country case studies of food security coordination through the cluster system. Interviews were conducted with a cross section of different categories of stakeholders, including UN agencies, donors, national governments, local and international NGOs, academics and the global FSC itself. A qualitative analysis of the interviews and case studies highlighted six major issues facing the global FSC.

Leadership of clusters and coordination. Several important considerations on the issue of leadership emerged from the interviews and case studies, including the circumstances in which the UN should lead on coordination; the issue of multiple lead agencies; and the separation of coordination tasks from the agenda of the lead agency.

Enabling different coordination linkages. Four important issues arose relating to the broader remit of coordination at the country level: cross-cluster coordination ("lateral" linkages); lines of responsibility ("vertical" linkages); incorporating other functions at the country level ("parallel" linkages); and the incorporation of national and local viewpoints and information into the formal coordination mechanisms ("outward" linkages).

Key challenges for coordination at the global level. The interviews and case studies highlighted important issues related to coordination at the global level, drawing attention to the unique role of the global Food Security Cluster. Four key issues emerged: defining and prioritizing the global FSC's coordination role; coordinating innovation; information management; and ensuring the capacity for surge support.

Transition and exit in the context of food security. The primary focus of the FSC—at both the country and global level—arose in nearly every interview and case study, and there were sharply divided views on this issue. While the non-emergency functions of the global FSC (capacity development and development of guidance) are clear, there is little consensus about how (or whether) either the global cluster or country clusters should deal with food security concerns beyond purely emergency response.

Accountability and effectiveness. The interviews highlighted several points related to improving accountability and effectiveness; however, there was not uniform clarity on whether this applies to the global cluster level or country level. The key issues identified include greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation; the elements of accountability of the global cluster; and the issue of how to measure the impact or effectiveness of the global cluster.

Funding. Funding emerged as an issue of concern with divergent perspectives. Two issues, in particular, were highlighted: funding for country clusters and the global cluster, and management of centralized funding mechanisms.

Addressing many of these issues will require broader coordination among actors and institutions that do not necessarily have similarly-aligned interests and incentives. However, the global FSC itself can do several things. First, given the myriad issues the global FSC faces, the cluster leadership can provide some strategic prioritizing. The global FSC is forming a Strategic Advisory Group to assist in this task. Second, while clusters exist for humanitarian purposes, it is clear that cluster coordination is more effective when good preparedness plans are in place and where longer-term concerns are taken into consideration in the acute emergency response. Finding the right balance of "upstream" and "downstream" food security concerns is a priority question facing the global FSC. Finally, good leadership in the right place at the right time is a key component of an effective response and effective coordination, and ensuring this leadership is one of the challenges facing the global Cluster. The global FSC should highlight these needs—the former obviously to donors, the latter to its own member agencies, since they are likely to be the agencies from which staff coordinators could be borrowed to support surge capacity in a crisis, but also to international and national NGOs whose staff should also be engaged.

Donors can provide support to the global FSC in three ways. First, donors can make clear priorities they see at the global level and engage at the country level where capacity exists. In cases where Food Security Clusters are effectively championing appropriate interventions and promoting joined up analysis and programming, donors can support this by ensuring that funding is available to put these strategies into effect quickly on the ground. Second, examples arose in the analysis where the global FSC can and must function as a main repository of experience and lesson learning related to food security programming. Donors can support these kinds of functions that only a global Cluster can engage. Third, ensuring the expertise for innovative approaches is critical for strategic success. Some of this expertise may well exist within donor agencies, and donors can support by lending this expertise, in addition to resources, to support innovative approaches. ■

Background

In May 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) formally launched the global Food Security Cluster (FSC)[1] as the UN's global mechanism for coordinating food security responses in emergencies worldwide.[2] While the cluster system had been in place nearly six years by then, and elements of food security have been addressed within the cluster system on an *ad hoc* basis at the country level, leadership had not previously been designated for integrated food security response at the global level. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) commissioned this paper. It briefly reviews the mandate of the newly formed global FSC and analyzes a range of issues and challenges facing the cluster.

Much has changed about food security response in emergencies over recent times. The past decade has seen a major investment in improving food security analysis as well as the development of a much broader range of options for response. Past responses were largely confined to food aid (either general food distribution or blended grain-and-pulse products for supplementary feeding) and seeds-and-tools support to farmers. A much wider range of options exists now for food assistance (with greater emphasis on cash responses and vouchers and innovative attempts to harness the energy of the private sector in providing assistance), for nutritional support (in the form of ready-to-use foods and more community-based delivery systems), and for livelihood-based responses (which are replacing in-kind inputs). In addition, donors and agencies are increasingly recognizing the linkages between food security, nutrition, health, and livelihoods in emergencies, and placing greater emphasis on cross-sectoral programming in order to achieve the goals of each sector (Webb 2009).

Although famine has been declared in Somalia in 2011, mortality in acute food security crises has generally been reduced over recent years. But new challenges have arisen and several old ones remain. New realities include major food-price increases in 2008 and again in 2011, and an overall environment of increased price volatility, putting vulnerable populations everywhere at greater risk. Climate-related food security crises appear to be growing more frequent, even though the majority of response spending on food security continues to be in conflict-related emergencies. But increasingly, contemporary crises are the result of multiple causes—both "human-made" and "natural." And crises are increasingly long lasting: in 2010, nineteen countries in Africa reported crises with significant food security consequences for at least eight of ten previous years. In some of these countries, these "crises"—if one can continue to call them that—had been on going for nearly 30 years (FAO/WFP 2010).

While much of the official funding for food security response goes through a limited number of UN agencies and the 8–10 largest international NGOs, the number of actors in food security response continues to grow—particularly in the NGO sector. Even before the January 2010 earthquake, an estimated 3,000–10,000 NGOs were operating in Haiti (US Institute for Peace 2010). In the context of Haiti, many of these claimed a food security objective or mandate. Worldwide figures are not fully known.

All of this underscores the need for greater coordination. Not only is the number of actors larger, the operating environment is more complex, and the range of responses requires substantially greater levels of skill in analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring. Old challenges related to risk management and strategically linking the protection of life and livelihood in emergencies to longer-term

[1] The cluster is referred to as the "Food Security Cluster" or the global (with lower case) Food Security Cluster. The upper case "Global" was excluded because of a perceived potential confusion with the Committee on World Food Security (Interview 2011). For the purposes of this paper, the cluster is referred to as the "global Food Security Cluster" or "global FSC."

[2] According to the widely accepted definition, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

concerns about sustainable production and equitable access remain. Even large, well-established agencies are sometimes challenged.

This paper is structured as follows: Section I reviews the background to the Cluster System and the global FSC in particular. Section II summarizes its formal mandate. Section III draws on a series of interviews and cases studies carried out from May-August 2011, to present a brief analysis of the major issues and challenges facing the new cluster. These are discussed in a broader context in Section IV. Four individual country case studies of food security coordination through the cluster system were also analyzed, including the Haiti 2010 earthquake, the Pakistan floods of 2010, the 2008 post-election violence and 2011 drought in Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire's 2010–11 post-election crisis. These cases highlight country-level coordination issues, while the interviews highlighted global coordination challenges. Several of the case studies predate the global FSC, so the case studies are not meant to assess the capabilities of the global cluster, but rather to highlight some of the challenges the global cluster faces in facilitating coordination at the country level.[3]

Proposal for the Creation of a Global Food Security Cluster

On February 4, 2010, at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)[4] Principals Meeting, FAO and WFP agreed to initiate a consultative process to explore the possibility of creating a global Food Security Cluster. A series of consultation meetings were undertaken with IASC members and other key stakeholders, including international NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements, other cluster lead agencies, UN organizations, and donors. At the 77th IASC Working Group Meeting held July 7–9 2010, FAO and WFP put forward a joint proposal for establishing a global Food Security Cluster (FSC). The global FSC would "support country-level clusters and strengthen their capacity to plan and implement proportionate, appropriate and timely food security responses in humanitarian crisis situations" (IASC 2010, p. 2). Under the proposal, the existing Global Agriculture Cluster would merge into the new global FSC. The IASC Working Group endorsed the proposal and recommended to the IASC Principals that they also endorse the establishment of a global Food Security Cluster, jointly led by FAO and WFP. Based on the consultative process and review of lessons learned from other clusters, five core functions were identified for the global FSC: provision of tools and guidance, short-term surge support, capacity building and knowledge management, information management support, and support to country-level and global food security advocacy. These are discussed in Section II.

At the IASC Principals Meeting on December 15, 2010, the global FSC proposal was submitted for consideration of the IASC Principals, at which time the IASC Principals endorsed FAO and WFP's joint proposal to establish a jointly led global Food Security Cluster.

What is the Cluster Approach?

In August 2005 the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs commissioned a Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) to assess humanitarian response capacities in crises and to recommend ways to address existing shortcomings in capacity and response. One main conclusion of the HRR was that for several key response sectors, the humanitarian responses were unpredictable and *ad hoc*; it recommended that a "cluster approach" be established at different levels and for different priority sectors (United Nations 2005). The HRR envisioned the cluster approach as a way to strengthen partnerships and formalize leadership arrangements of agencies and organizations in key response sectors.
In December 2005, based on the HRR's recommendations, the IASC formally established the cluster approach to "address identified gaps in response and enhance the quality of humanitarian action by strengthening partnerships between

[3] These case studies are in a separate document, and can be found on the FIC website (http://fic.tufts.edu).

[4] The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) functions as the main mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, involving both UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.

NGOs, international organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and UN agencies" (IASC 2006, p. 1). At the global level, the cluster approach aims to strengthen humanitarian preparedness and response by ensuring predictable leadership and accountability in the main sectors of humanitarian response. At the country level, the cluster approach's goals are to improve humanitarian response by strengthening predictability, accountability, and partnership in all sectors while enhancing strategic responses and prioritization of resources by formalizing global lead agencies for key sectors and better defining roles and responsibilities (the lead at the country level is determined by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator there). Initially, clusters and lead agencies were identified for nine sectors, summarized in Table 1.

coordinated surge support and information management. For the response sectors of food, agriculture, education, and refugees, clusters were not established as the leadership and accountability within these sectors were considered to be already clearly defined. At a later stage, however, the sectors of education and agriculture attained cluster status. The education sector pursued a formal process of seeking IASC acceptance as a cluster in November 2006. The agriculture sector, led by FAO, also pursued cluster status in November 2006, requesting at the IASC 66th Working Group Meeting that "all sectors be part of the cluster appeal process" (Stoddard et al. 2007, p. 25). This was followed by a request by FAO to OCHA in March 2007 that agriculture be included in the 2007–08 appeal (Stoddard et al. 2007).

Table 1. Global Clusters initially formed by IASC

Global Cluster	Global Cluster Lead Agency
Nutrition	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Health	The Global Cluster Lead Agency for Health in World Health Organization (WHO)
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	UNICEF
Emergency Shelter	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
Camp Coordination and Management	UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Protection	UNHCR/UNICEF/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Early Recovery	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Logistics	WFP
Emergency Telecommunications	OCHA/UNICEF/WFP

The global FSC is jointly led by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Members include international NGOs (as many as twenty to thirty). Other partners include other clusters—particularly the most closely related ones – nutrition, health and water/sanitation/hygiene (WASH). Partners will participate in support of national cluster actions, including the key core tasks of

From its creation in 2007 until its incorporation into the global Food Security Cluster, the Global Agriculture Cluster did not convene. The Global Agriculture Cluster members included FAO, OCHA, and a number of other UN agencies and NGOs. While a global cluster for agriculture was established, the food-related response sector remained a 'non-cluster' at the global level. At the country level, however, a variety of food

clusters under different leadership arrangements emerged depending on the context and need. Two specific examples include the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad, which established food security clusters co-led by FAO and WFP. However, country level food- and agriculture-related clusters have been established in many other countries as well; as of 2010, 9 agriculture clusters; 11 food security clusters; 15 clusters combining food security with agriculture, nutrition, or livelihoods; 3 clusters combining agriculture with livelihoods; and 4 livelihoods clusters existed (FAO 2010).

How has the Cluster Approach Performed?

When the cluster approach was formally introduced in 2005, IASC called for two phases of external evaluations. Stoddard et al. carried out the Phase One Evaluation in 2007 with the objective of "assess[ing] major achievements and shortcomings of the cluster approach looking for trends toward key expected outcomes" (Stoddard et al. 2007, p. 86). The Phase Two Evaluation, carried out by Steets et al. in 2010, intended to "explicitly evaluate the cluster approach on the results it has had on improving humanitarian response" (Steets et al. 2010, p. 147).

Findings of the Phase One Evaluation. The Phase One Evaluation found that overall, the cluster approach had contributed to improvements in coordinated humanitarian response, stronger and more predictable leadership over sectors, and better preparedness and surge capacity. These improvements differed across countries and were largely driven by clusters at the country level, with minimal support from global clusters. The lack of support from global clusters was mainly attributed to the fact that they were unable to build global humanitarian response capacity, due to late receipt of funding (Stoddard et al. 2007). Instances in which global and country-level clusters performed poorly were due primarily to the weak leadership of the lead agency or cluster personnel. While the evaluation found that the cluster approach helped to increase predictable leadership over sectors, it did not find any improvements in overall accountability, and stakeholders raised questions about how the concept of Provider of Last Resort (POLR) would work in practice.

In terms of country-level clusters, the evaluation found that in most cases, stand-alone agriculture clusters contributed less to the objectives of the cluster approach than more flexible and more integrated clusters that emerged based on different circumstances and needs (usually labeled "food security" or" livelihoods" clusters). According to Stoddard et al., food security clusters that WFP and FAO co-led "suffered from low FAO capacity in terms of personnel available to perform cluster coordination roles" (Stoddard et al. 2007, p. 25). Based on these findings, the evaluation recommended that the IASC consider establishing a "global food cluster" as an alternative to the global agriculture cluster. The evaluation recommended that WFP lead the cluster with FAO possibly serving as a co-lead. The "global food cluster" would function as an "open forum for dialogue on policies, strategies, and innovations in food programming, as well as alternatives and/or complements to food aid, and to provide technical assistance to field clusters in whatever form they take, depending on needs and conditions on the ground" (Stoddard et al. 2007, p. 97). However, the IASC did not accept this recommendation, as "members and standing invitees of the IASC Working Group had different views on how best to ensure a common forum for discussing food-related issues at the global level" (Stoddard et al. 2007, p. 92). It should be noted that the 2007 discussion was still about the notion of a "food cluster," rather than a food security cluster.

Findings of the Phase Two Evaluation. The Phase Two Evaluation identified a series of improvements and benefits resulting from the cluster approach, as well as a number of challenges and shortcomings. The coverage of humanitarian needs had improved in several sectors, including gender-based violence, child protection, disability, water and sanitation, and nutrition. In general, humanitarian actors were found to be targeting assistance more effectively and using resources more efficiently, partly because gaps in humanitarian assistance were being better identified while duplications were being reduced. The evaluation also found that organizations were exercising more-predictable leadership and that leadership roles were clearer. In addition, partnerships between UN agencies

and other international humanitarian actors were generally strengthened, which was helping to build a humanitarian identity among cluster members and mobilize resources for humanitarian response.

However, the Phase Two Evaluation also identified a number of shortcomings. Clusters generally failed to take into account national and local actors and neglected existing coordination and response mechanisms. This was attributed to insufficient analysis of local capacities prior to the implementation of clusters and the limited use of participatory approaches. The Phase Two Evaluation noted that the cluster approach has occasionally put humanitarian principles at risk, especially in situations where leads are also engaged with integrated missions or peacekeeping forces or where actors are involved in conflicts. Meanwhile, limitations in cluster leadership, management, and facilitation have constrained the cluster approach generally. Clusters have also had difficulty coordinating with each other while assessments and humanitarian responses have not adequately taken into account crosscutting issues.
The Phase Two Evaluation's findings for food- and agriculture-related clusters were similar to those of the Phase One Evaluation. The country case studies identified significant implementation and coordination challenges for country clusters in which food aid and agriculture existed separately. However, for countries with combined food security and agriculture or livelihoods clusters, such as in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, results were positive. The Phase Two Evaluation recommended the creation of a "Global Food Security Cluster" to integrate "food aid, agricultural issues and other livelihood interventions and address related institutional and policy issues at the political level" (Steets et al. 2010, p. 90).

The Global Food Security Cluster in Context

The Global Cluster is one part of the "architecture of food security response." The overall architecture spans everything from global initiatives that strengthen support to agriculture and rural livelihoods (such as the G-8 *Joint Statement on Global Food Security*); to specific organizations and specialized agencies that play a particular role in food security response (such as the FAO or WFP or the panoply of non-governmental organizations), or that play a policy coordinating role (such as the UN Committee on World Food Security, or CFS); to international treaties or agreements (such as the Food Aid Convention, or FAC) that govern the commitments of donors to provide an international food safety net. The FAC is currently in the process of being renegotiated. The global Food Security Cluster joins this constellation to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian response in acute emergencies. ■

Mandate and Functions of Global Clusters

Global clusters have two overarching goals: (1) to provide systematic, timely, and predictable support to country-level clusters and (2) to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity for humanitarian response by ensuring predictable leadership and accountability (IASC 2006). IASC's "Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response" (2006) outlines three core areas of responsibility for Global Cluster Lead Agencies:[5]

1. *Standards and policy setting.* This involves the consolidation, dissemination, and development of policies and standards and the identification of best practices.

2. *Building response capacity.* This consists of training and system development at the regional and national levels, establishing and maintaining surge capacity and standby rosters, and establishing and maintaining material stockpiles.

3. *Operational support.* This includes assessments of need for human, financial and institutional capacity; emergency preparedness and long-term planning; securing appropriate technical expertise; advocacy and resource mobilization; and pooling resources and ensuring that efforts are complementary by enhancing partnerships.

Table 2 identifies thirteen functions of Cluster Lead Agencies at the country-level.

Table 2. Generic terms of reference for sector or cluster leads at the country level

1. Ensuring the inclusion of key humanitarian partners
2. Establishing and maintaining appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms
3. Coordinating with national authorities, state institutions, civil society, and other relevant actors
4. Ensuring utilization of participatory and community-based approaches
5. Attention to priority cross-cutting issues
6. Ensuring effective and coherent sectoral needs assessment and analysis
7. Ensuring contingency planning and preparedness
8. Planning and strategy development
9. Application of standards
10. Monitoring and reporting
11. Advocacy and resource mobilization
12. Training and capacity building
13. Provision of services as a last resort

Core Functions of the Global Food Security Cluster

The global FSC aims to "support country-level clusters and strengthen their capacity to plan and implement proportionate, appropriate and timely food security responses in humanitarian crisis situations" (IASC 2010, p. 2). Ultimately, the principal objective of the global FSC is to provide leadership and guidance to country-level clusters in order to improve food security responses on the ground.

During a consultative process in early 2010 with a wide range of food security stakeholders, five main functions were identified for the global FSC.[6] These proposed functions are outlined in FAO and WFP's "Joint Information Note on the FAO/WFP co-led Emergency/Humanitarian Food Security Cluster" (2010) and include the following:

[5] Note these are for "Cluster Lead Agencies," not the global clusters themselves (i.e., in this case, WFP and FAO, not the global Food Security Cluster).

[6] These may evolve over time, but were the original functions identified for the global FSC.

1. *Provision of tools and guidance.* The global FSC aims to share operational and technical guidance, existing tools, and best practices with country-level Food Security Clusters. In situations where country-level clusters identify gaps in these areas, the global FSC would assist with the development and dissemination of new operational and technical guidance and tools. To facilitate the dissemination of technical guidance, the global FSC plans to carry out both regional and country-level trainings.

2. *Short-term surge support.* In sudden-onset crises or significant worsening in the context of protracted crises, the global FSC would identify staff from cluster partners who could deploy rapidly to fill gaps in country-level Food Security Clusters. These deployments would last 3–4 months and be supported by a rapid deployment fund that would be established and maintained by the global FSC.

3. *Capacity building and knowledge management.* The global FSC intends to train individuals and cluster members to carry out country-level cluster functions. Training activities would focus on capacity needs assessments and cluster-specific training at the global, regional, and country levels. The goal of the global FSC's capacity-building activities is to improve both coordination capacity and technical capacity. Four main areas of capacity building have been proposed: (1) standard cluster coordinator and cluster information training, (2) country-specific and demand-driven cluster training, (3) development of an online inventory of available food security-related training courses and training materials, and (4) the creation of an online knowledge management platform linking Food Security Clusters together to share knowledge, experiences, lessons, and good practices.

4. *Information management support.* The global FSC aims to increase the efficiency of information management and sharing by utilizing existing information systems and developing a platform that would enable timely information sharing with cluster members. To facilitate this, a cluster website has been established (www.foodsecuritycluster.org) to provide a single point of reference for information on guidance and tools, as well as key documentation and contacts for country-level clusters. The overall goal of the global FSC's information management efforts is to refine available information and to identify and disseminate what is most useful.

5. *Support for country-level and global food security advocacy.* The global FSC intends to function as an advocate for emergency food security resource and operational needs at the global and country levels. The global FSC would advocate as a cluster to make operational gaps or unmet needs evident to partners and donors. The cluster would also encourage all cluster partners to undertake advocacy and to raise awareness on behalf of country-level Food Security Clusters in humanitarian crisis situations.

Other Potential Functions of the GFSC

In addition to the five core functions of the global FSC, other potential functions have been identified. Some of these additional functions are outlined below:

1. *Inter-cluster coordination***.** Inter-cluster coordination is considered an important function of the global FSC. The global FSC intends to coordinate closely and forge synergies with all clusters, particularly with the Nutrition, Early Recovery, Health and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) clusters. In May 2010, FAO and WFP began drafting a set of working principles with the Global Nutrition Cluster to more concretely define the boundaries between nutrition and food security clusters (FAO/WFP 2011). This "working principles" document is in the process of being finalized (IASC 2011). There has also been consultation with the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER) to discuss ways to mainstream early recovery into the global FSC (FAO/WFP 2010). In addition to inter-cluster coordination, the global FSC is addressing crosscutting issues, such as gender, HIV and AIDS, and environment, in cluster programmatic planning and implementation.

2. *Coordination with other food security stakeholders*. In FAO and WFP's "Joint Information Note," improved coordination is considered the "primary value added" of the global FSC as it can help "bring food security partners together and increase coordination of their responses without affecting the operational accountabilities and responsibilities of individual cluster partners" (FAO/WFP 2010, p. 6). The global FSC intends to enhance partnerships between national governments, UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and international and national NGOs (IASC 2010). This will be accomplished at least in part through staff secondment from IFRC and NGOs to the FSC Global Support Team.

3. *Support to national authorities*. In line with IASC's "Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities" (2009), the global FSC intends to work with national authorities and to promote capacity building of national institutions, especially in countries with recurring disasters (FAO/WFP 2011). The global FSC aims to ensure that existing coordination mechanisms are supported or complemented by country-level food security clusters. Through its Cluster Lead Agencies, FAO and WFP, and its partners, the global FSC plans to promote capacity-building initiatives for national authorities through the provision of technical assistance, training, and support.

4. *Resource allocation and mobilization*. According to the "Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Lead Agencies," FAO and WFP intend to provide leadership and strategic direction on assessing and prioritizing project proposals and common funding criteria for inclusion in Consolidated Appeals, Flash Appeals, CERF requests and other inter-agency funding appeals. FAO and WFP aim to ensure that country-level food-security cluster strategies and priorities that are agreed upon are adequately reflected in appeal documents. The plan is to establish mechanisms for accountable financial resource allocation within the cluster.

5. *Coordinating food security information*. As part of the global FSC's core functions related to the provision of tools and guidance and information management support, the global FSC aims to provide recommendations on situation- and response-analysis tools, such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), and will draw on existing information systems.

Key activities conducted in 2011

Key activities already carried out in 2011 include surge support to Libya, Kenya, Pakistan, Cote d'Ivoire, and scoping missions to Somalia, Nepal, Haiti, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Information management efforts include the development of a website and a more general communications strategy. Tools and guidance dissemination has begun, including training and capacity development. A capacity development syllabus was developed and delivered to 23 trainees on coordination support and information management, with further rounds of training to follow soon. With regard to advocacy, the global FSC is developing messages, and has formed an advocacy working group. ■

A series of issues arose from interviews with key informants and the development of four country case studies of humanitarian food security coordination. These are grouped into six major thematic areas, each with several points or issues that emerged from the case studies and interviews. The major themes are (1) leadership, (2) enabling effective coordination on the ground, (3) key challenges for coordination at the global level (i.e., the role of the global FSC itself), (4) transition and exit in the context of food security, (5) accountability and effectiveness, and (6) funding. Each of these is briefly explored below.

The Leadership of Clusters and Coordination

Three important considerations arose from the interviews and case studies on the issue of leadership. One concern is the circumstances in which the UN should lead on coordination, one is on multiple lead agencies, and one is on the separation of coordination tasks from the agenda of the lead agency.

1. *Who leads coordination: The UN or national governments?* The role and responsibility of national governments to their own population is very clear under International Law, and most observers agree that everything should be done to both *recognize* this and to *reinforce* the leadership of national governments in coordinating food security response. At times—either because of low levels of pre-existing capacity or the impact of the disaster itself (or both)—national governments simply don't have the capacity to respond to a disaster or even to coordinate a response. To a certain degree, Haiti, at least in the immediate aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake, was a case in point. At times a government, even one with adequate capacity and a functioning coordination mechanism, may temporarily lose its impartiality—at least in the perception of humanitarian actors and of people caught in a conflict-related crisis. The Kenya example is perhaps a case in point. Of course, in other cases objections to a national government leading the coordination of a response are legitimate when the government or party in power is a major driver behind the humanitarian crisis (as one might argue in the case of Darfur) or is simply too weak and internally contested to effectively govern, much less coordinate a response (such as in Somalia). Each of these requires a different external response in terms of the leadership of coordination. This is a much broader issue than the simple coordination of food security responses. However, as food security (typically, food aid) is the biggest category of response and often the first on the ground to scale up, in some ways the coordination of food security is tied very closely with overall choices about humanitarian coordination and response more generally.

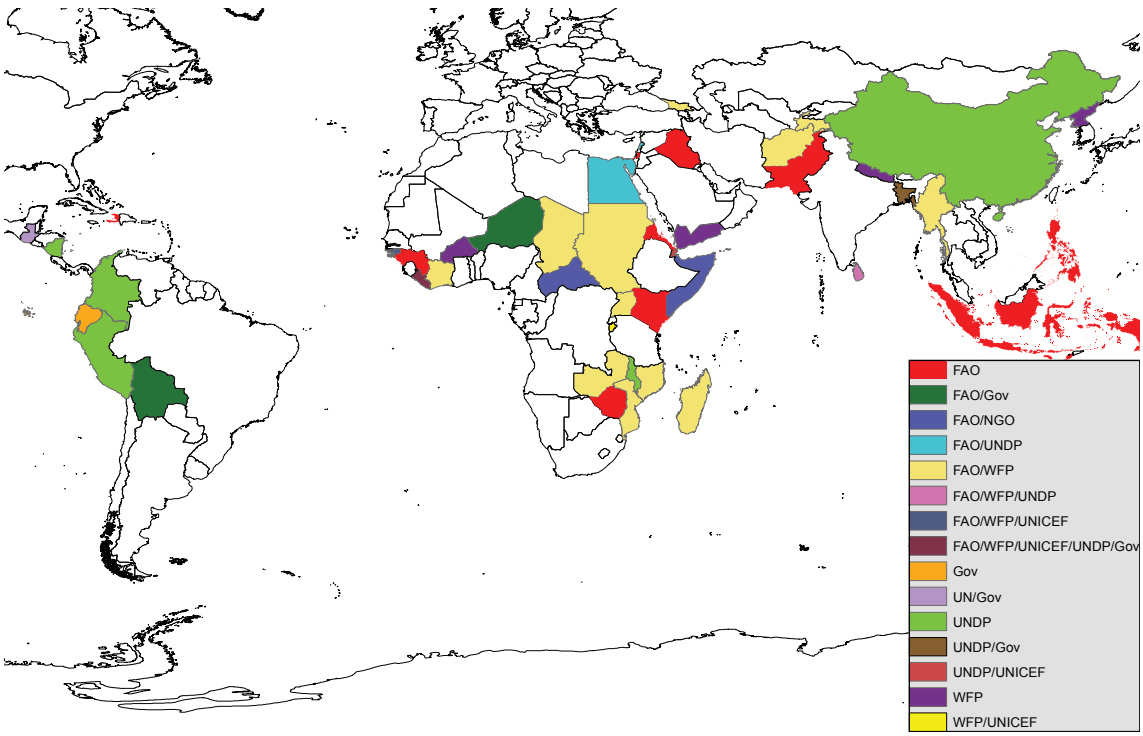
At the same time, there is evidence of duplication or competing systems in cases that do not fit the clear exceptions above. The Kenya and Pakistan cases are examples, although in Kenya, the government and the UN seem to have come to a reasonable compromise that works. In South Sudan, cuts in funding for a government-led mechanism seem to have put much of the coordination effort back into the cluster system even though at the moment, South Sudan does not seem to fit one of the above exceptions. The Pakistan case study provides some insight into a third example. Given the complexity of the humanitarian context, these situations are bound to arise—the emphasis should be on how to manage these situations. In exceptional occasions, governments cannot or should not lead, but these are exceptions. How to manage these (especially the first two mentioned above—temporary loss of capacity and temporary loss of impartiality) is the big issue. By studying lessons from situations in which the UN and government seemingly compete for the lead, the global FSC can provide better guidance to country-level clusters in actual emergencies. Clarity of roles is critical—to the extent possible, this should be worked out in advance.

2. *Multiple lead agencies.* Several respondents expressed doubt about the working arrangement of a shared lead (between FAO and WFP) for the global Food Security Cluster. At face value, the arrangement seems to be working well—lines of responsibility are well drawn out, there is an equitable balance in staffing of the global FSC, and the leadership of both organizations reaffirmed their commitment to the arrangement at the inception meeting of the global FSC in May 2011. But several issues arise. An issue noted by some respondents is the very different capacities and roles of WFP and FAO—and how these play out at the country level. Another issue is that multiple clusters are on the ground, and their leadership arrangements vary (see Figure 1). While the funding for the global FSC has a clear criterion that 75 percent of newly formed clusters will be jointly led, it isn't clear what happens with the multiple different currently existing clusters—and the global FSC can only advise, not instruct, existing clusters because they are responsible to the in-country UN Humanitarian Coordinator.

While the global FSC has indicated it is committed to working with whatever structure makes sense on the ground, some stakeholders strongly believe that the lead agencies (FAO and WFP—not the Global FSC *per se*) should promote a joined-up cluster at the country level more vigorously. Otherwise much of the potential benefit (i.e., the joined-up analysis and response that a food security cluster can offer, as opposed to a food assistance cluster and an agriculture cluster) is lost. Several of the case studies highlight the issues of fragmentation of food security response.

Figure 1 makes clear the plethora of arrangements prior to the launching of the global FSC. In theory, the same logic of a joined-up food-security cluster at the global level would translate into joined-up food-security clusters at the country level, and a shift in this direction is becoming evident. Some newly formed national clusters (e.g., Libya and Djibouti) began as jointly led structures, and some existing cases of multiple (i.e., separate agriculture and food) clusters

Figure 1. Leadership arrangements in country clusters, related to food security (2010)



Source: FAO 2010

are moving towards an integrated food security cluster (e.g., Somalia).

But Figure 1 makes clear how big the task is. In the end, of course, simply having a jointly led cluster doesn't automatically mean having a joined-up analysis or response planning process. This issue is more about the intent of actors on the ground to promote a joint approach than it is simply a matter of having a jointly led cluster.

3. *Separation of cluster-lead responsibility from lead-agency mandate or agenda*. Many respondents noted cases of clusters (not necessarily just the pre-cursors of the Food Security Cluster) where coordinators had multiple roles—in the cluster, and in their own agency (so-called "double-hatting"). While this has sometimes been necessary because of funding constraints, nearly everyone agrees that the coordinator role has to be agency-neutral and impartial with regard to the cluster —particularly if it includes any role in resource allocation. Nevertheless, the reality is that cluster and agency roles still sometimes overlap in the person of the coordinator, and separating them is an urgent priority. The global FSC promotes separately funded coordinators with no agency responsibility, but it still often comes down to a matter of funding. In cases where there are separate food and agriculture clusters, coordinators tend to still come from WFP or FAO respectively.

Linkages: Beyond Internal Cluster Coordination at the Country Level

Core functions relating to the country clusters are well covered in the basic terms of reference for the global FSC. But four points emerged beyond the terms of reference related to the broader remit of coordination at the country level. Coordination is all about forging and maintaining linkages. The first is the issue of what might be called lateral linkages (cross-cluster coordination); the second is around vertical linkages (to whom clusters actually answer); the third is parallel linkages (other functions at the country level); the fourth might be called outward linkages (the incorporation of national and local viewpoints and information into the formal coordination mechanisms).

1. *Lateral linkages: Cross-cluster coordination*. Related to the issue noted above about the variety of country arrangements, the issue of getting different clusters to coordinate among themselves is critical (this is especially critical where separate food and agriculture clusters, or food and livelihood clusters, exist). Several models are instructive: The "survival strategy" approach in Pakistan seems to have improved inter-cluster coordination. This involved meetings between respective coordinators, and the concentration of the resources of the four "life saving" sectors (food, nutrition, heath, and water/sanitation/hygiene) into the most critically affected districts. Reconstructing the results of that approach would be worth investigating—many respondents referred to it, but very little public-domain documentation is available about how it worked or what the impact was.

Several caveats were raised about developing sub-clusters or cross-cluster working groups to deal with every technical issue that arises (a major example being cash transfers, since cash can be used to address multiple different sectoral objectives). Particularly in Haiti, the number of sub-clusters and working groups increased to the point that some respondents felt the whole system began to lose track of the purpose of clusters or of coordination.[7] Much of this involves the role of OCHA. A critical point of inter-cluster coordination regards the linkages of the so-called "life-saving" sectors with "early recovery." This is dealt with at greater length below.

An additional issue raised by respondents relates to the linkages and potential overlap between food security and nutrition, and how clusters can coordinate food security and

[7] There is a separate issue, which is that having a meaningful discussion can be difficult when over 100 parties occupy a room, so an "information sharing" cluster meeting has to be supported by smaller technical groups working on thematic issues. This is not the concern being raised here.

interventions and nutrition interventions. One respondent noted that, while this issue is being addressed at the agency level, it is unresolved at the cluster level (Interview 2011).

2. *Upward linkages: To whom do clusters respond and answer?* On paper, cluster coordinators have several different masters. Formally, they answer to the lead agencies, and the lead agencies answer to the Humanitarian Coordinator. Yet, at some level, they also must answer to the membership if they want to remain relevant and actually play a coordination role. The relationship between the global FSC and country clusters is one of "backstopping" (not line management) that includes the surge support, capacity development and advocacy functions noted above. While on paper, the individual lines between a coordinator, the lead agencies, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, the global FSC and the membership have been delineated, the totality adds up to a less-clear picture—for example, a line-management responsibility to the lead agency, though a responsibility to act independently of agency agendas on cluster matters. The country coordinator is clearly the lynchpin to the whole system: exactly how the global FSC can help to make the coordinator role more manageable in the case of food security will no doubt be an on-going challenge. A similar issue at the global level relates to the overall governance structure of the global FSC. Some respondents stressed the importance of the global FSC engaging a wider set of stakeholders, including INGOs, in its governance—noting that within the current governance structure, the focus is on reporting to lead agencies with limited participation of other stakeholders. Some respondents felt that too much attention has been placed on the relationship between the global and national cluster. To make the system work, more bridges need to be built to OCHA and the UN Humanitarian Coordinators in country.

3. *Parallel linkages.* Many food security functions other than those listed above exist in an emergency, and many other actors are engaged in food security activities: some degree of coordination with these other actors is critical. Early warning (EW) and needs assessment are issues that clusters engage with, but other actors are also involved—and clusters have to engage with them, too. Both FAO and WFP have significant resources at the global level—and in most chronically at-risk countries—for food security information but these resources are not integrated into cluster activities. In some countries, strong national EW systems exist. In a number of countries, there are now IPC teams that are independent from clusters, but have overlapping roles and overlapping representation. While there are good reasons to keep the IPC as a separate function, there is a need for close coordination. In a few countries, joint efforts are made on response analysis and links to preparedness or contingency planning or technical groups promoting new approaches (cash, vouchers, local and regional procurement, livelihoods support, etc.). The relationship of food security clusters to these other activities isn't clearly spelled out and, like other issues noted here, the global FSC can only give guidance, not management. Uniformity of linkages isn't necessarily called for, but clarity of linkages certainly is.

4. *Outward linkages.* A critical issue emerging from the case studies—particularly Haiti, but to some degree all of them—is the limited ability of clusters, at least in some cases, to incorporate the viewpoints of national or local actors. The Haiti case highlights crowd-sourced information—which was critical to search and rescue, but was not used much in the official response thereafter. Many civil society actors were very frustrated when they saw mistakes being made but were unable to make their perspective heard. One Haitian civil society respondent (not referring specifically to the food or agriculture cluster) noted a deep cultural barrier that exists between the cluster system and local civil society, noting that, "the cluster system is attached [to] or part of a very complex bureaucracy . . . Ordinary people get completely lost! The response of local NGOs is that many people in the field have stayed

away from the cluster system. It doesn't seem like it is doing much for us. They see that their time is wasted . . . and ultimately they decide to do without the cluster system" (Interview 2011). This problem is by no means limited to Haiti—but the Haiti clusters were an important example of the issue.

The global Food Security Cluster mandate does not directly address these linkage issues—but given the high turnover in cluster coordinator positions and the limited life-span of clusters in some countries, experience related to all these questions needs to be accumulated in institutional memory somewhere. With regard to food security programming, the global FSC could have a formalized role as the repository of this knowledge, and in making that knowledge available through programmatic guidance.

The Unique Potential of the Global Food Security Cluster

Four key issues emerged from the interviews and case studies related to the unique role of the Global Food Security Cluster: (1) defining the global FSC's coordination role, (2) coordinating innovation, (3) information management, and (4) capacity to ensure surge support.

1. *Defining the coordination role: Information sharing or strategic leadership?* A question arising from the interviews is the extent to which the global Food Security Cluster should push the envelope on coordination: should the role prioritize a more traditional approach to surge support, information sharing, and traditional "Who, What, Where?" mapping exercises during crises, or should it prioritize strategic leadership to focus on improving food security responses? While most respondents agreed that the former cannot be ignored, many felt strongly that the global Food Security Cluster has an opportunity to go well beyond standard coordination approaches, highlighting its potential to establish and harmonize global standards and technical guidelines, to create greater coherence among food security actors, and to champion more innovative approaches. In particular, a number of respondents emphasized that the global Food Security Cluster can help promote a broader range of food security response options, dealing more comprehensively, for example, with cash programming and livelihoods support, while promoting collaboration with the nutrition cluster to promote a more integrated approach. This is the intent of the leadership of the global FSC, but there will be challenges.

2. *Coordinating innovation.* There is little question that the actual work suggested by these respondents has to occur at the country level, but the opportunity for the global FSC is to emphasize that its role includes coordinating *innovation*, as well as its more traditional functions. The case studies highlighted that innovation in food security responses often occurs outside of the cluster system. In Kenya, innovations are currently being coordinated separately by a donor group. Within the cluster system, cash and livelihoods support responses have, in several cases, been taken on by early recovery clusters—and were buried in very technically oriented working groups. The Côte d'Ivoire case, in which food security cluster members were eager to roll out cash responses but lacked technical leadership, highlights one example of the potential strategic guidance role that the global Food Security Cluster could provide to country clusters. In Somalia, where cash transfers are the major response to acute food insecurity because WFP cannot operate in al-Shabab controlled territory, these are being coordinated separately by the food cluster (unconditional transfers) and the agriculture and livelihood clusters (conditional transfers).

3. *Information management.* The issue of information management has two elements that should not be overlooked. The first relates to the management of food security information derived from early warning systems, needs assessments, response analysis, and monitoring and evaluation. In addition to FAO and WFP, a number of other actors are involved in these activities, including but not limited to national governments, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), and the Integrated Phase Classification tool initiative, which now have teams

working in a number of countries. Strengthening linkages between food security actors in-country is a country-cluster function, but several respondents noted that the global Food Security Cluster could help through guidance and capacity development. The second relates to issues defined in the global FSC's terms of reference, including situation reports and reporting to donors and national governments. The emphasis seems to be placed on the second issue, but for the global Food Security Cluster to provide a strategic leadership role, the emphasis must be equally on the first issue, and the role of country clusters needs to be strengthened.

4. *Capacity to ensure surge support*. While not unique to the food security cluster, the issue of surge support arose in almost all of the case studies and was also highlighted in the interviews. In Haiti and Pakistan, some respondents felt that the high turnover of staff weakened coordination and the overall humanitarian response. The issue of surge support is not just limited to having personnel available, but also ensuring that deployed staff were sufficiently qualified and experienced. In both Haiti and Pakistan, inexperienced cluster leads (in general, not—in this case—referring to food or agriculture clusters) without adequate leadership capacity diminished the effectiveness of the cluster system as a coordination mechanism. Much has been made of the requirement for the right combination of technical knowledge, coordination skills, and people-management skills. The case studies also underscored the crucial importance of contextual knowledge and language skills. In sum, the combination of skills required for effective coordination leadership is high: The global FSC must find a way to try to provide this combination quickly, without permitting "perfect" to become the enemy of "good enough." But while this combination of attributes is important to good coordination, they don't all have to be found in the same person. Contextual knowledge, for example, could well come from someone other than a cluster coordinator—but it has to in the cluster leadership. The global FSC has adopted a two or three-person team approach to address this issue, but of course that is a greater cost than one person.

Focus: "Humanitarian?" Transition and Recovery? Risk Management?

The primary focus of the Food Security Cluster—at both country and global levels—arose in nearly every interview and case study. And there are sharply divided views on this topic. The non-emergency functions of the global FSC (capacity development and development of guidance) are spelled out fairly clearly. But there is little consensus about how (or whether) either the global cluster or country clusters should deal with food security concerns beyond purely humanitarian response. [8]

1. *Transitions and exit strategies, disaster management, and "mission creep."* Many interviewees, but particularly donors, insist that the cluster system is part of a humanitarian reform, and their mandate is strictly humanitarian. Occasionally some elements of an emergency response require a clear separation from other elements of programming (recovery, development, etc.). But two issues arise: First, the debate in the food security community about the usefulness of trying to separate "emergency response," "recovery," "mitigation," and "risk reduction" into distinctly different categories is long and unsettled. And second, transitions in programming occur even within the narrower range of emergency responses, so the issue of transitions is on the agenda irrespective of how one looks at the broader issue. An example of this latter point was evident in the Haiti response when the government told the food cluster to stop general food distribution. Transition to some other kind of food assistance programming was required, but the cluster hadn't given adequate thought to what the next phase of programming should be or how to make the

[8] It should be noted that this discussion is not about whether livelihood-protecting activities are part of humanitarian response—it is about the relationship to transitions, and disaster risk management activities that are critically important to preventing food insecurity in crisis, but inevitably labeled part of "longer-term" activities.

transition, and thus a break in support occurred. This wasn't about "recovery" *per se*—it was about a second modality of emergency response. So the thinking about "transitions" needs to take place at several levels, both within and beyond a purely emergency response.

But the larger issue is about transitions or "early recovery"—and also about being prepared for setbacks that may require more intensive humanitarian responses (i.e. "transitions" can go both ways). In effect, the debate boils down to the approach taken to humanitarian action: a purely "emergency-response" (life-saving) approach or a "disaster management" approach (in which preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery, and risk management or livelihoods protection are all integrated). Both can be defined as "humanitarian."

The Côte d'Ivoire case notes an example where the lack of preparedness for a rapid return to a major humanitarian crisis resulted in a delay in getting a response up and running (and fuels the argument that, had there been better preparedness, the emergency response would have been significantly improved). The Kenya case highlights a more integrated approach, but one in which the government is clearly leading on disaster management, with the UN playing a greater role in the more purely emergency response. Such a division of labor didn't exist in Côte d'Ivoire, but whether it would have worked had it existed is not clear. Several case studies underscore the observation that simply creating an early recovery cluster—or even lumping food security and early recover together into a single cluster—has not adequately addressed this issue.

There are valid arguments on both sides of this debate: Donors express a lot of fear about "mission creep;" many other respondents fear that doing a good job coordinating humanitarian response is impossible if longer-term, risk-management elements of food security are ruled out. No clear agreement exists on where a "humanitarian" mandate with regard to food security ends, and where some other mandate takes over. This question clearly applies to the issue of early recovery and transitions, but it applies to a risk-management approach more broadly. While many respondents see a role for clusters here, it should be a secondary priority to ensuring basic coordination functions in an emergency. This is clearly an issue that needs to be managed because some stakeholders will be disappointed no matter what direction the Global Cluster takes on this point.

2. *Non-emergency roles of the global FSC.* The role of the global FSC in non-emergency situations is clear. Its priority is capacity building at the country level. The role of country clusters is less clear—fears about "mission creep" arises if other, non-emergency activities are taken up, but critical institutional memory and momentum are lost if clusters simply disband in the aftermath of an emergency. One role that the global FSC is taking on is to document experiences related to analyzing the chronicity of risk, the likelihood of repeat emergencies, and the nature of linkages to national structures. This documentation allows it to make case-by-case recommendations in post-crisis situations.

Accountability and Effectiveness

Several points arose regarding improved accountability and effectiveness, although there was not uniform clarity on whether this applies more to the global cluster level or the country level.

1. *Greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation.* Some respondents stressed the need for stronger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within country-level food security clusters. This issue was highlighted in both Haiti and Pakistan, where little support for M&E was provided, limiting the ability of food and agriculture clusters to collect information related to a range of program information: end-use of assistance, accuracy of targeting, the timeliness of assistance, and crucially, impact. One informant described the process as being good

at collecting and making available information on how much food was delivered (the quantity monitoring part of the task), but had no capacity for determining that had received assistance or what the assistance had achieved (the quality monitoring part of the job). Another respondent suggested that M&E systems should adopt a "4-W" approach (in addition to the traditional information on who is doing what, where, information should be collected and shared on *who* received what and where). While M&E is not explicitly included in the terms of reference of the global FSC, it is critical for improving the quality of information and the overall effectiveness of responses. One respondent, who had substantial experience with cluster coordination, noted that of hundreds of temporary staff seconded to various different clusters (not just food and agriculture) for surge support purposes in recent years, not a single one was sent to improve M&E in the emergency response. The global FSC is incorporating this concern into its 2012 work plan.

2. *Accountability.* Respondents identified three elements of accountability of the global cluster: external accountability (to donors, IASC, and host governments), internal accountability (to members), and downward accountability (to emergency-affected communities and populations). The latter—accountability to emergency-affected populations—is both a country-cluster and agency obligation and an IASC-wide concern. However, like so many issues arising in this analysis, it is an area in which country clusters may well look to the global FSC for leadership, ideas, and tools. The issue of external accountability has already been noted: the global FSC itself is accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinators of WFP and FAO while the country clusters are accountable to the Country Humanitarian Coordinator and ERC. Internal accountability to members relates to both country clusters and the global cluster

3. *How to measure impact or effectiveness of the cluster.* Respondents all agreed on the importance of measuring the effectiveness of the global FSC itself; however, how this measurement might actually occur was less clear. Donors tended to stress that ultimately the impact of the global FSC should be measured by whether it leads to better and more integrated food security response strategies on the ground. Many other respondents emphasized process indicators—leaving the responsibility for impact assessment to actual programs on the ground, which of course are not operated by the global cluster. Many emphasized the importance of establishing performance indicators for both global and country clusters, and evaluating their performance in light of these.

Funding

Funding is no one's favorite topic, but is equally an issue of concern with divergent perspectives. Two issues arise here as well.

1. *Funding for country clusters and the global cluster.* Views vary, but the general sense is that for rapid-onset disasters, donors will provide funding for clusters and coordination activities at the country level. Trying to make funds available from other sources would simply be so time-consuming as to undermine the whole function of the clusters. For the global cluster, on the other hand, initial start-up funding is a special project supported by a limited number of donors, and is expected to be time-delimited. When special-project funding ends, donors say that support for the global cluster's functions will have to be "mainstreamed" into core budgets of the lead agencies

2 *Management of centralized funding mechanisms.* The second issue that arises is whether donor funding—particularly in the form of centralized multi-donor mechanisms like the CERF—should run through the clusters at country level. Some donors are in favor of this, noting that it would give clusters some "teeth" to really lead on innovation and demand results from members. Other donors suggest that it would reduce transactions costs—at least from the donors' point of view. However, many donors are opposed—mainly

on the grounds of conflict of interest, since cluster members would have to decide who would get funding, and keeping coordination interests and agency interests separated would be impossible. Many agencies are opposed to having centralized funding mechanisms linked to clusters—citing, in particular, conflict of interest, the potential compromise of impartiality if governments get involved, and turning what is intended to be a forum for inter-agency cooperation into a forum for competition. Like several other concerns raised here, this is not an issue that the global FSC can directly address, but insofar as it impacts the functioning of country clusters, it is an issue that affects the global FSC, and one in which some thoughtful and impartial leadership may be needed. ■

Numerous issues arise in discussion of the mandate and potential roles of the global Food Security Cluster. Some of these can be addressed directly by the cluster itself; others will require broader coordination, including coordination with and support from donors. This final section highlights three recommendations to donors and three to the global Food Security Cluster itself.

Many of the issues the cluster faces are symptomatic of the issue of coordination itself. They can only be addressed by cooperation among many actors and institutions that do not necessarily have similarly-aligned interests or incentives. Simple line management or executive decision-making cannot directly resolve them because no single entity—certainly not the global FSC itself—has that kind of line-management authority. This calls for a good deal of "leading from behind"—promoting good ideas and approaches, getting organizations with different objectives and incentives to work together, and using whatever leverage possible (whether "sticks" or "carrots") to encourage the required joint effort.

The cluster leadership no doubt has to do some strategic prioritizing—clearly far too many issues exist for the global FSC to lead on all of them. The global FSC is proposing various ways of approaching this task. For the global Cluster to excel, it will have to lead not just on coordination, but on providing the leadership to build more comprehensive strategies for food security in crises; on being the repository of experience from country experiences that might otherwise be lost due to the turnover of staff; and on ensuring the necessary expertise to champion innovative approaches in crises.

Donors can assist in this task in three ways. The first is by making priorities clear from their perspective, and by ensuring that funding is available to put strategies into effect quickly on the ground. Donors can make clear the priorities they see at the global level, but can also engage at the country level where the capacity exists. Where Food Security Clusters are effectively championing appropriate interventions and where joined up analysis and programming to effectively protect food security on the ground is being promoted, donors can acknowledge and support this kind of coordination with timely and effective support for the strategies being promoted. But this requires engagement and dialogue, not just funding.

Second, donors can support the kinds of functions that only a global Cluster can engage. Examples arose in the analysis where the cluster can and must function as a repository of good practice and be a source of good ideas when they are required. In some cases, if clusters are disbanded in the aftermath of a crisis but the country continues to be at risk of ongoing food security crises, the global cluster is well placed to ensure that adequate monitoring continues, and that lessons learned are not forgotten in times when country-clusters are not active. While the humanitarian country team and the lead agencies of the cluster might retain some of this experience, it makes sense for the global Food Security Cluster to be the main repository of this experience and lesson learning, where food security programming is concerned.

Third, it is clear that ensuring the expertise for innovative approaches is critical for strategic success. This may require stand-by capacity for the global Cluster, but may also require knowing exactly *who else* is the repository of such good practice (for example, the cash learning project, CaLP, in the case of cash programming in food security crises; IPC teams in the case of crisis analysis, etc.). Some of this expertise may well exist within donors agencies, and donors can support by lending this expertise, in addition to resources, to support innovative approaches.

The clusters exist for humanitarian purposes, and donors are rightfully wary of the temptation to address too broad a range of issues. However, little doubt exists that cluster coordination is more effective when good preparedness plans are in place, and where clusters are ready to work jointly and take into consideration longer-term concerns in the acute humanitarian response. Indeed at least preparedness concerns are part of

the mandate of clusters. Finding the right balance of "upstream" and "downstream" food security concerns and effective coordination in acute emergencies are an urgent task facing the global Cluster. This is a difficult path to tread because it is easy to over-step, but one that makes a demonstrable difference in crises.

Much of the success or lack thereof with past coordination efforts hinged on the qualities of the particular individual serving as cluster coordinator. But limited availability of qualified individuals and high turnover of staff were probably the biggest single constraints to effective coordination in recent food security crises. Good leadership in the right place at the right time has been shown again and again to be a key component of an effective response, and ensuring this leadership is another major challenge facing the global Cluster. But having such people prepared and ready to deploy into a crisis situation requires both money and the cooperation of the agencies in whose staffs such individuals are embedded. The global FSC should highlight these needs—the former obviously to donors, the latter to its own lead agencies, since they are likely to be the agencies from which staff coordinators could be borrowed to support surge capacity in a crisis, but also to international and national NGOs whose staff should also be engaged. A fair amount of experience now exist with the development and training of staff for similar kinds of engagement, and knowledge about how to manage such rosters—the Global Cluster is not starting from scratch on this task.

Finally, given the plethora of hopes and expectations, the issue of clarity of priorities is paramount. The global Food Security Cluster should set its priorities after consultation with its stakeholders, and then ensure that the same stakeholders are aware of what the priorities are and how each of them can help. This process was begun at the inception meeting in May 2011, and is set to continue with periodic follow-up meetings. ■

This analysis was conducted over a relatively short period on a relatively limited budget. The primary sources of data consist of interviews with some 35 key informants and the development of four country-level case studies. Case studies were selected to represent a wide range of experiences across three different regions, but focused on recent disasters and the issues arising out of cluster coordination mechanisms within those disasters. These are presented in a separate annex. Qualitative analysis of themes and issues arising from both sources of data resulted in the categories in Section III. The interviews were conducted with a cross section of different categories of stakeholders, trying to emphasize the diversity of viewpoints as much as possible within the categories.

It should be noted that the attempt was to interview stakeholders and key informants representing may different perspectives. In many cases, this led to obtaining information that at face value was contradictory, with little possibility of actual verification. Though some of the reviewers insisted that one point of view was correct and another incorrect, we have tried to represent discordant viewpoints as honestly as possible. In some cases, upon further investigation, some respondents clearly were referring to coordination issues more generally, and others were referring specifically to the new global Food Security Cluster, or some of the country clusters in food or agriculture that preceded it. We have tried to incorporate these points into the analysis.

Categories of stakeholders included the following:

- The staff of the newly formed Global Food Security Cluster;
- Other staff of the lead agencies (FAO and WFP);
- Other UN staff (particularly those involved with the coordination of related clusters);
- Donors (and among donor agency staff, those who specialize is either food security or emergency or both);
- National government policy makers (in disaster management or coordination bodies)

Table 3. Interviews by category and organization

Donors	
USAID/FFP	Multiple
USAID/OFDA	Multiple
ECHO	Multiple
DFID	Single
CIDA	Multiple
NGOs	
CARE	Single
Save the Children	Multiple
World Vision	Multiple
Oxfam	Multiple
IRC	Single
IOM	Single
Catholic Relief Services	Multiple
Red Cross	
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Single
Kenya Red Cross Society	Multiple
Global Food Security Cluster	
GFSC Staff	Multiple
UN Agencies	
FAO	Multiple
WFP	Multiple
UNICEF	Multiple
OCHA	Multiple
National Governments	
Kenya	Multiple
South Sudan	Multiple
Haiti	Single
Pakistan	Single
Universities and Academic	
Universities and think tanks	Multiple
Local Organizations and Civil Society	
Haiti	Single
Kenya	Multiple

- International NGO staff (again, primarily those who lead food security response, or who play a cluster-liaison role);
- Local NGOs and civil society groups involved with food security responses (or who had tried to work within UN-led cluster mechanisms;
- Academics and researchers with background or knowledge of either food security and coordination issues, or specific case study contexts.

A listing of the organizations is provided in Table 3. For confidentiality, purposes, no names of individual respondents are included.

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