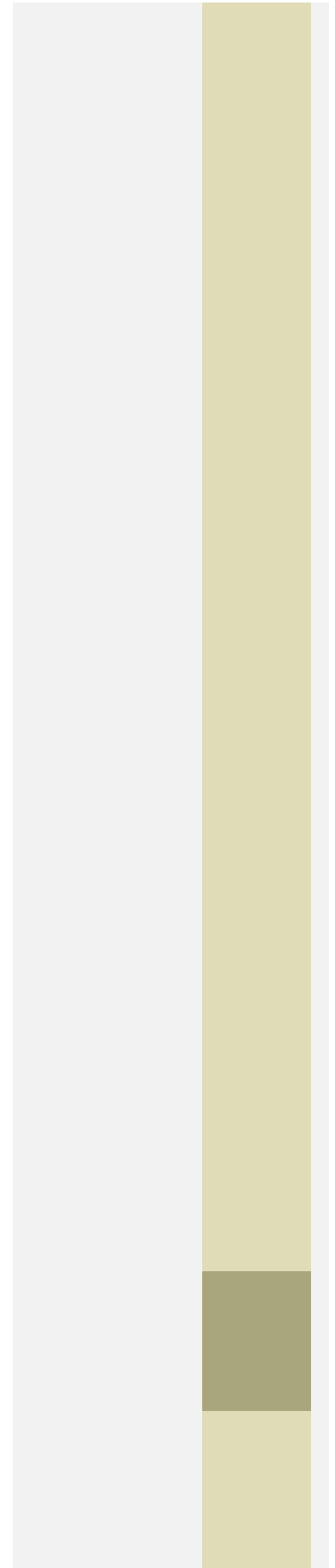# Cluster Performance Monitoring

Guidance Note

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Cluster Performance Monitoring

Guidance Note

The Global Cluster Coordination Group

Geneva, December 2012

Contents

Cluster Performance Monitoring

Introduction

What is the Cluster Performance Monitoring?

Cluster Performance Monitoring (CPM) is a self-assessment of cluster performance against the six core cluster functions set out on the 'Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level' and accountability to affected populations. It is a country led process, which is supported by Global Clusters and OCHA. The preference if for process to be carried out by all clusters (and sectors)[1], though it can be implemented by individual clusters.

Why monitor performance?

Monitoring coordination performance at the national and sub-national level in sudden onset and protracted crises can help clusters become are efficient and effective coordination mechanisms, which fulfill the core cluster functions, give cluster members more ownership of the cluster activities, and support delivery to affected people. It is also necessary for accountability purposes, as well as to demonstrate the added value and to justify the cost of coordination.

Background

The Transformative Agenda

In the Transformative Agenda of 2012, the IASC Principals agreed that 'there is a need to restate and return to the original purpose of the clusters, refocusing them on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results.' At the country level, the focus should therefore be on strengthening response through predictability, accountability, and partnership by ensuring better prioritization and defining roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations.

The IASC Sub-working Group on the Cluster Approach

The Transformative Agenda tasked the IASC Sub-working Group on the Cluster Approach with reviewing cluster guidance and considering ways to monitor the performance of cluster coordination at the country level. By September 2012, coordination performance monitoring questionnaires were developed and being tested in a few pilot countries (Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan).

The Cluster Performance Monitoring (CPM) process and questionnaires were endorsed by the IASC Working Group in August 2012.

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[1] Please note that the use of cluster in the Guidance Note can also be applicable to sectors using similar coordination structures.

The core cluster functions

The CPM is structured according to the six core cluster functions as agreed upon in the Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Field Level.[2] Adding to the six core cluster functions is a section on accountability to affected populations.

The questions in the survey are, therefore, divided into following sections:

1. Supporting service delivery
    *   Provide a platform to ensure that service delivery is driven by the agreed strategic priorities
    *   Develop mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery
2. Informing strategic decision-making of the HC/HCT for the humanitarian response
    *   Needs assessment and response gap analysis (across sectors and within the sector)
    *   Analysis to identify and address (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication, and cross-cutting issues
    *   Prioritization, grounded in response analysis
3. Planning and strategy development
    *   Develop sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the HC/HCT strategic priorities
    *   Apply and adhere to existing standards and guidelines
    *   Clarify funding requirements, prioritization, and cluster contributions for the HC's overall humanitarian funding considerations (e.g. Flash Appeal, CAP, CERF, Emergency Response Fund/Common Humanitarian Fund)
4. Monitoring and reporting the implementation of the cluster strategy and results; recommending corrective action where necessary
5. Contingency planning/preparedness/capacity building (please refer Section 6)
6. Advocacy
    *   Identify advocacy concerns to contribute to HC and HCT messaging and action
    *   Undertake advocacy activities on behalf of cluster partners and the affected population
7. [Accountability to affected populations]

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[2] https://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info/

The CPM is not…

The CPM is not

- a process to monitoring response (service delivery) of the cluster or the quality of its interventions. The CPM evaluates coordination functions of the cluster as a whole).
- a process to evaluate the performance of the cluster lead agency, co-facilitator or individual.
- a mandatory tool. Clusters can use other tools/questionnaires as long as a report is produced, which assesses each of the core cluster coordination functions.
- The CPM is not the same as the annual review of clusters, although the two processes both serve to monitor cluster coordination performance (see below).

The CPM and the Annual Cluster Review

While both the CPM and the Annual Cluster Review serve to monitor cluster coordination, they have very different objectives. As described above, the CPM provides for a self-assessment of the cluster's performance which allows the cluster to identify areas for improvement which will enable its collective effort to fulfill the core cluster functions and strengthen the accountability to affected populations. The CPM is a field driven process with the timeframe for implementation agreed upon within the cluster. The annual review of clusters is prompted by a letter from the ERC to the HCs in country, requesting that they review whether clusters should retain their status, be streamlined, de-activated etc. The proposals are reviewed by the Emergency Directors Group who subsequently makes recommendations to the ERC/Principals.

How to prepare for the CPM

When should this exercise be undertaken?

If clusters are activated, the CPM process should ideally be undertaken three months after the onset of an emergency and every year thereafter.

In protracted crises, it is recommended that the CPM is implemented annually, except in cases where core functions have been registered as weak, requiring more frequent monitoring and follow-up on improvement actions.

It is important to get the timing right, as experience shows that it is difficult implementing the CPM in a context where clusters have simultaneous commitments (e.g. the Strategic Planning Process, donor visits etc.) or are undergoing a transition.

What does the CPM involve and how long does it take?

The full CPM process generally involves the following:

- The CPM process and objectives are presented at the HCT
- The CPM process and objectives are presented and timeframe is agreed upon at the inter-cluster coordination meeting
- A preparatory meeting in each of the clusters where the CPM process and objectives are presented and questions are addressed
- Completion of two 20-30 minute online questionnaires over a two week period by the cluster coordination.
- Completion of a 20-30 minute online questionnaire over a two week period by cluster partners.
- Compilation of survey results in a Coordination Performance Report, which takes approximately 1-2 days.
- A half or full day cluster meeting to discuss results and develop an Action Plan.

These steps take place over a period of four-six weeks.

Time should also be allocated for monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan, including regular progress update and discussion at the cluster meetings and in the HCT.

Preparatory meetings

OCHA will present the CPM process and objectives at the HCT meeting and subsequently at inter-cluster coordination meeting,[3] where agreement should be established on timeframe for the implementation of the CPM. Cluster coordinators should, thereafter, convene with their partners to present the objectives, process and timeframe. These meetings will also serve to address questions that cluster partners may have.

Support from the Global Cluster or OCHA Headquarter can be requested for this purpose.

More specifically, the objective of the preparatory meeting is to obtain:

- Introduction of the CPM, its purpose, questionnaire, analysis and process;
- Clarification of questions related to process, language and outcomes;
- Agreement within the cluster
- Agreement with the HC/HCT and with other clusters if a multi-cluster approach to implement the CPM;
- Decision on implementation at national and, where relevant, sub-national level
- Agreement on timeframe for the three steps;
  - Survey (approximately 2 weeks)

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[3] A standard power point presentation is available for this purpose and the cluster coordination or inter-cluster coordinator can amend according to needs.

- o Discussion of the findings in Preliminary Performance Report (1-2 weeks after the survey)
  - o Contextualization of the Preliminary Performance Report and development of the Action Plan (1-2 weeks after the survey)
- Commitment to follow-up on agreed actions to improve performance.

Who should participate in the CPM survey?

Cluster Performance Monitoring is a cluster driven process that involves cluster coordinators and partners at the national level and, where relevant, at the sub-national level.

The cluster coordinators and/or inter-cluster coordination should ensure broad participation by cluster partners, including UN agencies, national and international NGOs, national authorities and representatives of cross-cutting issues.

When there are 'major' sub-national response hubs, each sub-national cluster structure should be treated as a separate entity and reported on by the partners present in that cluster and the sub-national cluster coordinator. This is a separate exercise to that performed by the national cluster as it brings additional detail and insight.

What is needed?

At country level, a standard **power point presentation** is available on the CPM process for the introductory meeting, which can be adapted by the cluster coordinator or inter-cluster coordinator convening the meeting. In addition, **internet access** is needed to complete the online survey. It is, moreover, important to **identify a timeframe** that allows clusters/cluster partners to attend the preparatory meeting, complete the questionnaires and participate in the half/full day meeting to discuss the findings in the Preliminary Coordination Performance Report and develop the Action Plan.

At the headquarters level, the secretariats of the global clusters or OCHA will provide **technical support** in terms of analyzing and compiling the Preliminary Coordination Performance Report.

Coordinating the implementation of the CPM

While the CPM ideally should be implemented on an annual basis, clusters decide when to implement the CPM.

The preference is that all clusters in a given country carry out the CPM exercise at the same time. If there is not agreement by the HC/HCT and/or clusters to carry out CPM across all clusters, individual (or small groups of clusters) are free to implement CPM on their own, with support of their Global Cluster.

If the country cluster expresses interest in implementing the CPM to the global cluster, the global cluster should (i) encourage the country cluster to speak to the other clusters and the OCHA Office to encourage multi-cluster participation and (ii) inform OCHA, which then will inform the relevant OCHA Office.

If interest is expressed to OCHA-HQ, OCHA shall (i) inform global clusters, which will follow-up with country clusters and support their decision-making and (ii) contact the Country Office, which then can advocate for a multi-cluster approach.

The CPM Survey

At the headquarters level, the secretariats of the global clusters will provide technical support to each country process, generate links to the questionnaires, manage the data from the questionnaire, and compile the responses into the Coordination Performance Report format to be sent back to the country clusters. OCHA will do the data management/processing tasks for those clusters for which the lead agency do not hold the CPM tool. The global approach to data management has been chosen as this would require less resources than if each country installs the software/database individually. It is important to know that the data compilation/analysis is done by technical staff and thus, does not involve a 'performance' review of cluster coordinators.

The survey consists of three separate online questionnaires:

1. A general description of the cluster structure (cluster coordinator)
2. A self-assessment questionnaire asking information about cluster performance (cluster coordinator and co-facilitator)
3. A self-assessment questionnaire asking information about cluster performance (cluster partners, cross-cutting issues)

The last two questionnaires ask the same type of questions referring to criteria for good performance of the core functions from the perspective of the coordinator and the partners.

Structure and scope of the questionnaires

The questionnaires aim at recording the view of partners and cluster coordinators about the functioning of the cluster in fulfilling its core functions. The questionnaire is mainly qualitative. This enables its use at national and sub-national level and in settings where cluster coordination needs and implementation might differ. The questionnaires will be completed via on-line anonymous forms but as noted earlier, clusters are free to use handouts and similar questionnaires developed for the same purpose.

Examples of questions: Planning and strategy development

Question: Has your organization been involved in the development of the sectoral strategic plan?

Answers:

- No sectoral strategic plan
- Organization not asked to participate
- Organization asked to participate but has not contributed
- Organization asked to participate, has contributed but contribution not adequately taken into account
- Organization asked to participate, has contributed and contribution somewhat adequately taken into account
- Organization asked to participate, has contributed and contribution adequately taken into account
- Do not know
- Not applicable for my organization (e.g. observers not engaging in this cluster activity)

Question: Has the sectoral strategic plan guided response from your organization in the last 6 months?

Answers:

- Strategic plan but not shared with my organization
- Strategic plan shared but not used by my organization
- Strategic plan shared and sometimes used by my organization
- Strategic plan shared and often used by my organization
- Strategic plan shared and always used by my organization
- Do not know

Questions are rated as follows:

Answers defined in five categories	Points
Should have been done but was not	0
The action or activity was started but did not function	1
The action or activity was started but was partially complete and/or performed in a partially effective manner. Did function but needs major improvements	2
The action or activity was performed in a generally effective and complete manner. Did function, needs minor improvement	3
The action or activity was completely performed in a fully effective manner. Did function well.	4
Don't know / Not applicable	-

Analysis and scoring

The questionnaires will be analyzed separately at national and each sub-national level. A score will be calculated for each sub-function (Annex II).

The median score will be further classified into performance status for each sub-function:

Score	Performance status
>0.75	Green = Strong
0.51-0.75	Yellow = Satisfactory (needs minor improvement)
0.26-0.50	Orange = Unsatisfactory (needs major improvement)
≤ 0.25	Red = Weak

Alternative to the online questionnaire

If internet access is not available to cluster partners, it is possible to replace the online questionnaires with handouts.

If the cluster opts for this approach, it important to be aware that this process will might be more cumbersome, as data entry and analysis will need to be done manually.

Regardless of how the data is collected it is important that a report is produced, which assesses each of the core cluster coordination functions.

Outcome: The Coordination Performance Report

When the questionnaires have been completed, the analysis of the questionnaires will be done automatically and two reports – the Cluster Description Report and the Coordination Performance Report - will be generated.

The Cluster Description Report

The completed Cluster Description Report provides information on the cluster structure and processes, as background information for this performance monitoring exercise.

The Preliminary Coordination Performance Report

The preliminary Coordination Performance Report displays the combined results from the anonymous self-assessment questionnaires completed by both cluster coordinators/co-facilitators and partners. The Coordination Performance Report provides an in-depth assessment of cluster-coordination, focusing on the six core cluster functions and the additional component on accountability to affected people. The report enables the identification of strong points as well as areas for support and improvement, and can be used by cluster lead agencies in identifying strengths and weaknesses in accountability to affected population.

Cluster discussions

The next step in the process is for the country cluster coordinator to circulate the Cluster Description Report and the preliminary Cluster Performance Report to cluster partners, and to schedule a cluster meeting to discuss the results.

During this follow-up meeting, the cluster coordinator/co-facilitator and cluster partners, convene to discuss the findings in the preliminary Coordination Performance Report. Good practices, constraints and follow-up actions to improve performance will be identified. The outcome of this meeting will be shared as appropriate with the lead agencies, the HC/HCT, national authorities, the humanitarian coordinator, and global clusters in a final coordination performance report.

Purpose: The meeting is an opportunity for self-reflection by the cluster, identifying areas that are working well and those that require additional attention, and raising awareness for support needed from the cluster lead agency, partners, the HCT, and/or global clusters. Open analysis and discussion with cluster partners on the results and needed improvements should serve to strengthen transparency and partnership within the cluster. This is also an opportunity to add any specific functional areas which could be unique to the cluster but not be captured under the six functional areas e.g. capacity building that is not explicit in the six core functions.

Timing: It is recommended that the follow-up discussion takes place within 2 weeks of the receipt of the preliminary Coordination Performance Report to benefit from the momentum.

Participation: All cluster partners, including UN agencies, national and international NGOs, national authorities and representatives of cross-cutting issues, should be invited. Partners that have not completed the self- assessment questionnaire should be encouraged to contribute to the cluster performance monitoring process in the cluster meeting.

Preparation: The cluster coordinator should have hard copies of the cluster description for all participants, and hard copies of the responses for each of the functions, to hand out to the respective working groups. Participants should also be encouraged to read the preliminary Coordination Performance Report before the meeting, and to come prepared to discuss improvement actions, including how they can specifically support these.

Proposed annotated agenda for follow-up workshop

Content	Annotations
Introduction and re-cap of the survey process	
Group work: Review and discussion of report findings and development of recommended action points per core cluster function + section on AAP (group work)	Participants be divided into groups with each group assigned to review results and comments, as well as to propose improvement actions.* • <u>Review and amend the Cluster Description</u> relevant to the assigned function • <u>Examine the performance status of the function</u> (color coded in green/yellow/orange/red, and detailed scoring of the questions related to the function) • <u>Identify what worked well</u> for that function • Discuss constraints and support requirements for that function (look at questions that scored 75% or below) • Identify issues relevant to cluster performance that were not included in the survey • <u>Prioritize actions for improvement per function</u> ! It is recommended that each group appoint a presenter (to give feedback to the plenary) and a note taker.
Coffee break	
Presentation in plenary: Presentation of key findings and endorsement of prioritised actions	• <u>Discussion of the cluster description</u> with focus on changes required that did not already come out of the discussion on the functions. • Recommend up to <u>prioritized follow-up actions</u> to improve performance of weak and unsatisfactory core functions (rated as below satisfactory in the report)[4] and identify time-frame and responsible for follow-up. It is recommended that responsibilities are allocated at the meeting • <u>Identify opportunities, constraints, request for support</u>

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[4] While the groups may pinpoint many recommendations for improvement, it is important to prioritize and limit the number of follow-up actions included in the report to focus cluster capacity on, for example, activities that will most benefit the population or which can be done without requiring additional resources.

Outcome: The Final Coordination Performance Report & Action Plan

The Final Coordination Performance Report

The Final Coordination Performance Report will include the comments from the cluster coordinator and partners as discussed during the follow up meeting aiming to contextualize the report findings on each function, i.e. to highlight particularities such as financial constraints etc. which might have impacted on the survey results.

The Action Plan

The recommended actions for improvement endorsed at the cluster meeting will feed into an Action Plan. The Action Plan will be integrated into the Final Coordination Performance Report. In addition, clusters may decide to keep the Action Plan as a separate document or to include in their work plan.

Clusters will decide on the format of the Action Plan, but the document should as a minimum include:

> ➤ Outline clear and prioritized improvement action per core cluster function and AAP (with special attention paid functions rated as unsatisfactory and weak).
> ➤ Timeframe for implementation of the action
> ➤ Identify responsible entities/organizations for following up on each action

The Action Plan will allow the cluster to monitor the implementation of the recommended actions, and where necessary seek support for this. The RC/HC and the HCT should use the Final Report and the Action Plan reports to maintain an overview of cluster performance.

Monitoring implementation of the Action Plan

Monitoring implementation of the Action Plan: The cluster coordinator will monitor implementation progress regularly and will takes stock of progress every month, but at a minimum every third months.

The inter-cluster coordination mechanism should review the Action Plans and Final Coordination Performance Reports of all assessed clusters to see the types of follow-up action proposed and to pinpoint common weaknesses across clusters that need to be addressed systematically. Each cluster should repeat this process annually, except in cases where core functions have been registered as red/orange, requiring more frequent monitoring and follow-up on improvement actions.

The final coordination performance reports and action plans, after having been discussed at the inter-cluster, should be presented to the HCT for information sharing and where necessary, identify concrete support actions needed by the HC/RC/HCT.
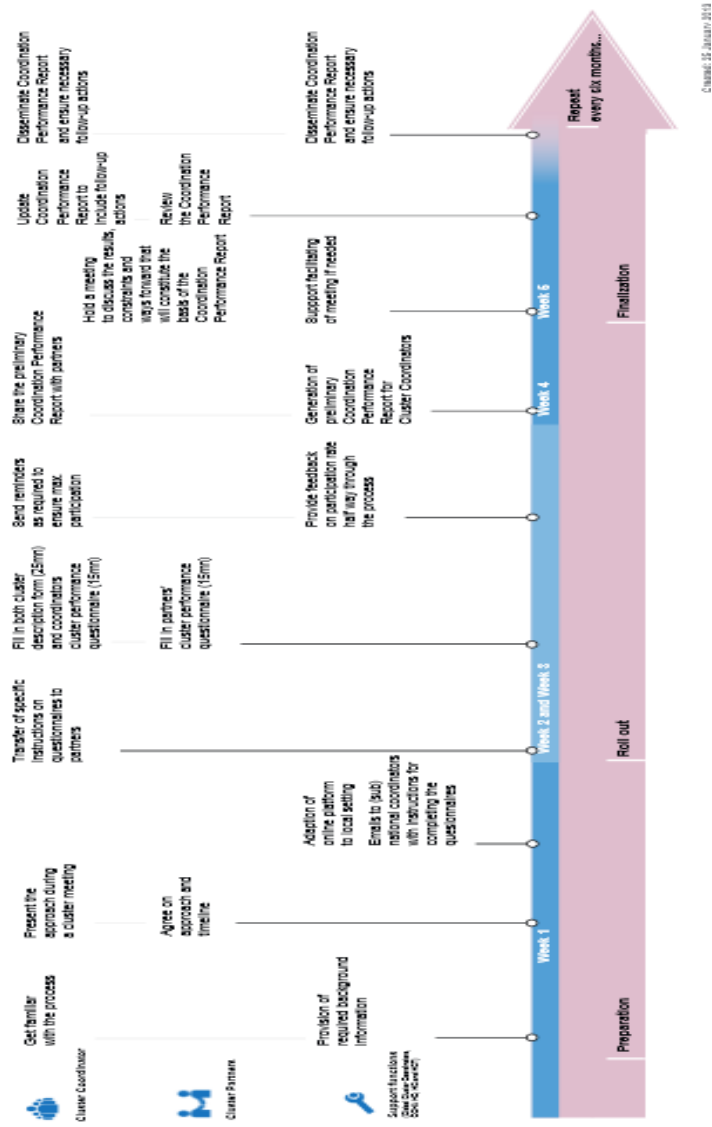
Contact and helpful links:

Questions and request for material can be addressed to the secretariats of the global clusters and OCHA field offices and at head quarters.

Further information on cluster performance monitoring can be found at the following websites:

Annex I: CPM Timeline

Annex II: How questionnaire scores are calculated

Comment [O2]: To be inserted