

Joint letter from Cluster Lead Agencies to their Directors/Representatives at Country Level

Dear Colleagues,

At the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group meeting in July 2009, representatives of all Global Cluster Lead Agencies discussed the implementation of the cluster approach. It was agreed that in order to strengthen coordination and accountability within the system, all Global Cluster Lead Agencies should write to their respective Country Representatives/Directors, reminding them of the crucial role they play in ensuring that their agencies fulfil their commitments as cluster leads. Specifically, it was confirmed that:


1. Representatives/Directors of Cluster Lead Agencies at the country level have a dual responsibility to represent the interests of both their own agency and the cluster(s) they lead in Humanitarian Country Team meetings (or equivalent) and in other relevant fora. Ideally, this dual responsibility should be reflected in their job descriptions and performance appraisals.
2. While Cluster Coordinators are responsible for the day to day running of clusters in the field, it is the Country Representatives/Directors of Cluster Lead Agencies who are ultimately accountable to the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (subject to agency-specific agreements defining such accountability) for carrying out their Cluster Lead Agency responsibilities (as specified in the November 2006 IASC '*Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*' and Annex 1, '*Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at the Country Level*').
3. Cluster Coordinators should act as neutral representatives of the cluster as a whole, rather than as representatives of their particular agency. One way to ensure this separation of roles is to appoint (i) a dedicated Cluster Coordinator with no agency-specific responsibilities and (ii) a separate cluster focal point for the agency who can represent the agency and participate in the work of the cluster on an equal footing with other cluster partners. These arrangements are a matter for each agency to decide on a case by case basis depending on the resources available, the security situation and other factors.
4. Where dedicated Cluster Coordinators are appointed, their responsibility to act as a neutral representative of the cluster as a whole rather than as a representative of their own particular agency should be reflected in their job descriptions and performance appraisals. In cases where the Cluster Lead Agency is not able to appoint a dedicated Cluster Coordinator, the individual who is given responsibility for cluster coordination at the country level will have a dual responsibility to represent both the interests of the cluster and their own agency programmes in relevant fora. This dual responsibility should be reflected in their job descriptions and performance appraisals.

In order to promote clarity when discussing the roles and responsibilities of different actors within the cluster approach, the Global Cluster Lead Agencies also agreed on the definitions which are attached as an annex to this letter.

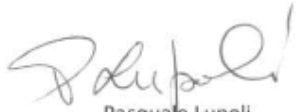
Signed



Laurent Thomas
Director
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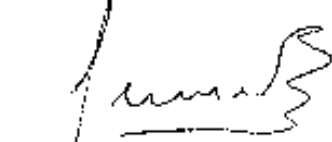
Under Secretary General
Disaster Response
and Early Recovery Division
International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



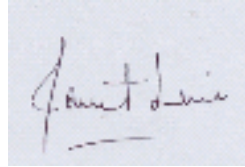
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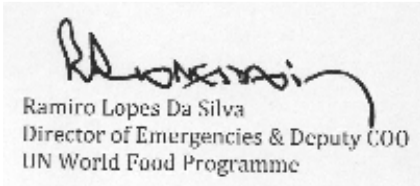
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Date: 20 October 2009

ANNEX

Regarding terminology, the following definitions were agreed by the IASC Working Group:

- **Global Cluster Lead Agency:** This is an agency/organization at global level that has been designated by the IASC as cluster lead agency for a particular sector.
- **Cluster Lead Agency (country level):** This is an agency or organization that has been designated by the Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) as cluster lead agency for a particular sector at the country level, following consultations with the Humanitarian Country Team. (A cluster lead agency at the country level need not necessarily be the same agency/organization as the Global Cluster Lead Agency for that sector.)
- **Global Cluster Coordinator:** This is a person who has been designated as global cluster coordinator by the Global Cluster Lead Agency. This person is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and facilitation of the work of global cluster
- **Cluster Coordinator (country level):** This is a person who has been designated as cluster coordinator by the cluster lead agency at the country level. This person is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and facilitation of the work of the cluster.