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WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE NOTE SAY ABOUT....

Designating cluster/sector leads at the field level

In the past, it was often the case that only a limited number of sectors had clearly designated lead agencies accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator. Few sector leads had consistent Terms of Reference against which to measure progress. The cluster approach aims to rectify this by ensuring that within the *international* humanitarian response, there is a clear system of leadership and accountability for all the key sectors or areas of humanitarian activity. The cluster approach should help to clarify the division of labour among organisations, better define the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organisations within the sectors, and provide the HC with both a first point of call and a provider of last resort in all the key sectors or areas of activity.

How are cluster/sector leads chosen?

- The HC consults with the IASC/Humanitarian Country Team to agree on the establishment of appropriate sectoral groups, and to designate sector lead organisation based on:
 - Assessment of needs and gaps
 - Mapping of response capacities (including those of the government, local authorities, and local civil society).
- Each designated cluster/sector lead is to be aware of the ToR for Cluster/Sector Leads at the Field Level.
- Common Humanitarian Action Plans and appeal documents should clearly state the agreed priority sectors, and the designated leads for each.

Who may be a cluster/sector lead?

- To enhance predictability, where possible, sector lead arrangements at the country level should be in line with the lead agency arrangements at the global level.
- The above principle should be applied flexibly, taking into consideration the strengths and capacities of humanitarian organisations already operating in the country/region.
- Considering the above, this may mean that in some cases sector lead arrangements at the country level do not mirror those at the global level.
- If this is the case, the designated cluster/sector lead at country level and the global lead should communicate to ensure that agreed global standards/procedures are applied.
- In some cases (e.g. where regional “hubs” have been established) NGOs or other humanitarian partners may act as sector focal points in parts of the country where they have a comparative advantage or where the cluster lead has no presence.

Must all nine “global” clusters be represented in the field?

- Leads should only be designated for the sectors that are relevant to the emergency.
- There may be cases where particular clusters are not needed (e.g. Logistics).
- There may be cases where particular sectors are merged (e.g. Health & Nutrition).

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- Separate “early recovery” groups should *not* be established; each sector group should ensure that early recovery planning is integrated into the work of the group.

What is the proper terminology: clusters or sectors?

- A “cluster” is essentially a “sectoral group” and there should be no differentiation between the two in terms of their objectives and activities. Both have the same ToR.
- The IASC/Humanitarian Country Team decides on the terminology to be used, e.g. “clusters”, “sector groups,” working groups,” task forces” etc.
- To ensure coherence, standard terminology should be used within each country and similar standards should be applied to all the key sectors or areas of humanitarian activity.
- Because of global commitments to humanitarian reform, country level cluster leads may not opt out of certain provisions of the cluster approach, such as “accountability” or “partnerships” or “provider of last resort.”
- There is no such thing as a “cluster lite” approach.