

Inter-Agency Standing Committee
REAL-TIME EVALUATION
CLUSTER APPROACH - Pakistan Earthquake

FINAL DRAFT

Application of the IASC Cluster Approach
in the South Asia Earthquake

Islamabad, Pakistan

10th – 20th February, 2006

Inter-Agency Standing Committee ***REAL-TIME EVALUATION*** ***CLUSTER APPROACH - Pakistan Earthquake***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the midst of active implementation of the response to the South Asia earthquake, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) real-time evaluation of the Cluster Approach offers a unique opportunity to derive immediate lessons, review overall effectiveness, and propose improvements for ongoing and future implementation of one of the most important reforms of the humanitarian system in the past thirty years.

It must be noted that regardless of any novel or traditional framework for the delivery of emergency relief, the massive seismic event that occurred on October 8 created an exceptional humanitarian challenge.

Although the early performance of the Cluster Approach in Pakistan was uneven and sometimes problematic, the comments of the Country Team were generally positive and recognized its potential for an improved response. The Cluster Approach successfully provided a single and recognizable framework for coordination, collaboration, decision-making, and practical solutions in a chaotic operational environment.

There were, however, many challenges. One prominent finding of this evaluation was that there was insufficient guidance from agency headquarters about the approach and Terms of Reference and other relevant documentation were not initially available in the field. As a result, there was an inconsistent understanding of the Cluster Approach by the Pakistan Country Team.

Roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined and the majority of people interviewed were not fully aware of implications of the Cluster Approach, why it was developed, and how it affects accountability, predictability, and reliability. Few respondents could elaborate on the critical notion of “provider of last resort.” For many practitioners in the field, the distinction between the Cluster Approach and the traditional sector-lead was elusive.

Several cluster staff agonized over the strain of separating cluster responsibilities from their agency mandated functions. It was felt that some clusters were driven as much by agency priorities as by cluster responsibilities. An identity shift away from “agency centrality” will be required for clusters to function properly.

Among the diverse community of institutions involved in the earthquake relief effort, participation by organizations in the cluster operation was inconsistent and ad hoc. It is clear that increased effort must be exerted to enlist NGOs, International Financial

Institutions, other government offices, and donors to broaden the Cluster Approach beyond merely a UN exercise.

In the context of Pakistan, the government played a vital role in the Cluster Approach and readily adapted its relief structure to the framework. Those clusters that had designated government counterparts were considered to have performed well while the others struggled until a suitable government partner was identified. The overall success of the relief effort to the earthquake turned on the competence and adept performance of the Government of Pakistan and its Military institutions.

In general the clusters with a technical emphasis performed well and drew their competence from a wealth of institutionalized best practices and experience in emergency response. Other clusters, such as those covering the broad range of cross-cutting issues, have a formidable task of growth and evolution ahead of them. Gender, human rights and environmental issues appear to have “fallen between the cracks” in the cluster application in Pakistan; or at best have not gained prominence as they are mainstreamed in the application of organizations’ assistance strategies.

Planning, information management, and gap identification were considered to be weak. Inter-cluster coordination was deficient as was the lack of a nexus between the field hubs and Islamabad. This fact diminished the potential of the Cluster Approach in this emergency.

The Cluster Approach offers the possibility of greater coherence in planning and cost estimation leading to reliable funding appeals. A potential conflict of interest was identified when the cluster leads were attracting resources on behalf of the cluster while simultaneously raising money for their own agency. Clusters leaders have to and should be free to do both.

Many respondents felt that an early start of recovery efforts was assigned low priority in the overall humanitarian response. Faced with the overwhelming demands to focus on life-saving interventions, development-sensitive programming and rehabilitation interventions were often treated as subordinate, delaying the start of recovery program interventions.

When conceiving the transition to recovery, many respondents assumed that the clusters will continue beyond the emergency phase in some yet-to-be-determined form. A strategy for the clusters in a post-emergency government-led structure was just beginning to develop.

As is true in every major relief effort, the personal attributes and dynamism of individual leaders are as significant as any structural enhancement that a new methodology can offer. Some staff lacked personal authority, leadership experience, and basic group facilitation skills required to manage clusters. This proved a significant hindrance to effective implementation of the cluster system.

It was made clear by respondents that in order for the Cluster Approach to succeed, the County Team will need to facilitate an “enabling environment” with greater guidance and support by the IASC and the Headquarters of its member agencies.

It is too early to evaluate the impact of the application of the Cluster Approach which should be kept under review after about two years of experience in various countries.

Key Action 1: The IASC Working Group must incorporate the Cluster Approach in all IASC member's operations manuals, training materials, and partnership frameworks and ensure briefing and training is provided to their staff.

Key Action 2: The IASC Working Group must disseminate the recently defined roles and responsibilities among Cluster Leaders and Members, Heads of Agencies and Organizations, Country Teams, and Humanitarian Coordinators. The roles of the UN Common Services and their responsibilities for provision of services to cluster members should be specified. Furthermore, consideration should be given to reviewing country level coordination arrangements with a view to mitigate duplication and overlaps between existing coordination structures and coordination activities generated by the Cluster Approach.

Key Action 3: The IASC Working Group, along with Global Cluster Lead Agencies and OCHA, should develop Cluster Toolkits for policy guidance, joint assessment and planning formats, minimum standards and benchmarks, and other relevant tools and documentation to be made accessible through a common information system in support of the field-level application of the new approach. Practical guidelines on inter-cluster linkages and reporting mechanisms for government and national NGOs should be included.

Key Action 4: OCHA and the IASC Working Group should examine how to further develop OCHA's role to fully support the cluster system and refine a cross-cluster coordination framework that ensures representation by all IASC members.

Key Action 5: OCHA must re-define the role of the Humanitarian Information Center in relation to the cluster system and include strategies for standard-setting, information management, and data analysis to support strategic decision-making.

Key Action 6: The IASC Working Group must facilitate greater involvement by the international NGO representative organizations and enlist their participation in order to increase the predictability of the core cluster membership.

Key Action 7: The IASC Principals, along with the UN Development Group, must reinvigorate high-level efforts to coordinate and partner with international financial institutions, and galvanize their support to the Cluster Approach.

Key Action 8: OCHA, in consultation with relevant IASC agencies, should explore the potential for the new CERF to support early deployment of dedicated Cluster Leads, Information Officers, administrative support, and provide cluster specific seed funding to ensure a capacitated response.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

During the Inter-Agency Standing Committee *ad-hoc* Working Group meeting held in July 2005, a proposal was made that the various UN agencies would be assigned to lead nine “clusters” intended to identify and fill assistance “gaps” in a predictable and accountable manner in all humanitarian response operations. Those agencies would also take on the role as the “provider of last resort.” This proposal was endorsed by the IASC Principals in September 2005.

Although it was agreed that the Cluster Approach would be applied to new major emergencies beginning in 2006, the interagency response to the South Asia Earthquake offered an early and important trial opportunity. Shortly after the earthquake of 8 October 2005, the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, along with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the UN Country Team, decided to apply the spirit of the Cluster Approach as the framework for coordinating the emergency response in Pakistan.

A Cluster Approach structure was readily established in Islamabad, the Flash Appeal was organized into clusters, and field cluster sites were later designated in each of the four “humanitarian hubs.” These field hubs have since become the focal points for operational coordination between UN agencies and the Pakistan Federal Relief Commission, Pakistan military, institutional donors, national and international NGOs.

In November 2005, the IASC Working Group requested an interagency real-time evaluation focusing on the practical applications of the Cluster Approach in Pakistan. The main objective of the exercise was to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the cluster framework in this context, propose any reorientation of the current implementation in Pakistan, and derive actionable recommendations to improve the ongoing global development and refinement of the Cluster Approach.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted through a Key Stakeholder Analysis that surveyed active participants in the cluster structure including members of the Country Team, Cluster Leads and members, Pakistan Government officials, agency headquarters staff, NGOs, and major institutional donors (Annex 2).

There were over 80 key informant interviews which provided a high degree of robustness and reliability to the findings. Two meetings were organized with key stakeholders at the end of the mission and the initial findings were presented and discussed. Furthermore, two validation meetings were held in Geneva with the learning group of the IASC / UNDG South Asia Earthquake Task Force and with the global clusters leading agencies before the report was finalized. The conclusions documented in this report are the result of accumulated impressions that were

repeatedly confirmed and cross-validated in numerous interviews and in a variety of different fora.

The evaluation took place from 10th–20th of February 2006 in Islamabad, Muzaffarabad, and Mansehra. The evaluation team met individually and in small groups in a semi-structured interview format. The team also attended several coordination meetings to observe the clusters in action. A modified data collection tool (Annex 1) guided these face-to-face meetings with open-ended questions intended to probe insights and candid impressions of the Cluster Approach *in situ*.

The scope of the interviews and surveys were intended to elicit information about the functioning and management of the cluster model related to:

- Application and understanding of the approach
- Needs analysis and priority setting
- Accountability and predictability
- Gaps in the response
- Standards and benchmarking
- Involvement of stakeholders
- Coordination, leadership, and inter-cluster contact
- Resource mobilization
- Capacity development
- Cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, environment and participation
- Transition to recovery and rehabilitation

The context of the emergency in Pakistan was unique in that it involved national authorities that were highly competent and overwhelmingly cooperative, it was a rapid onset natural disaster, and it was an event of exceptional scale. Hence the validity of the findings of this evaluation may apply to countries with strong pre-existing response mechanisms provided by national authorities and are not necessarily applicable more generally.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Understanding and Assumptions of the Cluster Approach

FINDINGS:

An overwhelmingly consistent finding in this exercise was a near universal lack of clarity of what the Cluster Approach is. At almost all levels of operations and management, the exposure to the Cluster Approach was sparse or, at times, non-existent. Little, if any guidance or documentation was available at the time when the application of the cluster system was introduced.

The *raison d'être* of the Cluster Approach, i.e. identifying and filling gaps, was not well explained. The important principle of flexible application based on each field context and on complementarity to the existing mechanism were also not well communicated. As a result some clusters were established where no gap existed. In some cases new entities were created - such as the "livelihood sub-cluster" and numerous groups (such as "hygiene and promotion") or "task forces" (such as "human rights", "gender" or "disability" under the protection cluster) - creating what some have referred to as "over-clusterization."

It is important to note that this was to be expected as the Cluster Approach is still in its early stages of conceptualization and has the anticipated "teething problems" of any new paradigm. As a result, roles and responsibilities were not clearly designated and Terms of Reference were late in arriving to the various stakeholders. Many of the Cluster Approach reference documents did not yet exist at the time of the initial earthquake response.

The need for pre-deployment exposure to and training on the Cluster Approach was blatant. Some respondents suggested the need for a cluster "cook book" or tool kit as a reference guide to the field. Despite requests for work plans and reference documents, it was apparent that many staff did not find the time to read up the guidance and information that was available. Awareness and exposure to this new approach must occur prior to deployment among all IASC members.

During the evaluation interviews, very few people were able to differentiate between the Cluster Approach and the traditional sector approach. Respondents observed that "cluster and sector was an interchangeable concept in the field" or "old wine in new bottles". In many instances, the cluster leaders had to simultaneously learn about the approach and then explain this new approach and distinguish it from the sector structure that most people were familiar with. In responding to the Questionnaire, many simply reflected on the sector-coordination approach in their answers.

The de-centralization of decision-making nodes with the creation of "humanitarian hubs", along with the inevitable rapid turn-over of staff in the early emergency, inhibited the institutionalization of the cluster notion.

Many respondents criticized the Cluster Approach as imposing additional layers of bureaucracy, coordination, and an excruciating meeting burden. There were concerns that, unchecked, the methodology could become a "cluster monster." One NGO leader commented, "almost every hour there was a meeting, with some overlapping."

Several respondents found it difficult to separate the cluster responsibilities from their agency mandates. Some felt that clusters were driven as much by agency priorities as by cluster responsibilities. It was difficult to suppress the dominant internal culture of some lead agencies when trying to enact the interagency ethos of a cluster.

Informants confirmed that the demands of the cluster leads require specific skill sets and dedicated resources. Most have suggested that a separate secretariat should be created in which this capacity could reside. Many informants recommended the complete segregation of operational responsibilities from coordination responsibilities in the role of cluster leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The IASC Working Group must ensure that the Cluster Approach is incorporated in all IASC members' operations manuals, training materials, and partnership frameworks. Briefings and training must be provided to their staff, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, donors, and relevant stakeholders, including governments.*
- 2. The IASC Working Group, along with Global Cluster Lead Agencies and OCHA, should develop Cluster Toolkits for policy guidance, joint assessment and planning formats, minimum standards and benchmarks, and other relevant tools and documentation to be made accessible through a common information system in support of the field-level application of the new approach.*
- 3. Global cluster leads must ensure that the initiation of clusters is limited to and based on filling identified gaps and establish guidelines and an exit strategy for phasing-out of clusters.*

2. Accountability, Predictability, and Reliability

FINDINGS:

The IASC endorsed the Cluster Approach as a framework for improved accountability, predictability, and operational reliability by humanitarian actors. With pre-designated agencies leading activity clusters that have been identified as critical gaps during the Humanitarian Response Review (HRR), institutions can be expected to strengthen preparedness and impart best practices, minimum standards, and practical tools that can be applied to emergency situations. This framework has established a predictable assignment of sector (cluster) responsibilities during an emergency relief operation, but has not fully addressed the challenges of field-level coordination, joint needs assessment and overall strategic planning.

Several respondents commented on the need for flexibility in the interpretation and assignments of cluster-lead agencies. Despite the headquarters determination of the assigned agency lead of a cluster, it is important for the country team to determine the comparative advantage and capacities of agencies on the ground to take that lead. Capacity to implement the work should be the overriding principle in applying the Cluster Approach to each new emergency situation. In Pakistan, the cluster grouping largely adhered to the global-level designations of IASC lead agencies with some variation. For example, WFP and UNICEF shared responsibility for Food and Nutrition, UNHCR accepted responsibility for camp management¹, and IOM took on

¹ In the Pakistan emergency, UNHCR accepted responsibility as the Camp Management cluster lead in contradiction to the decision made by the IASC Principals on 12 September 2005 that UNHCR would not lead any clusters in emergencies caused by natural disasters. This apparent contradiction demonstrates the importance of country management flexibility when determining cluster authority.

emergency shelter cluster. A newly formed sub-cluster on food security was to be co-lead by FAO and SCF. This flexibility and adaptability to the in-country situation is an important precedent and should be emulated in future cluster applications.

The demands of the emergency response were overwhelming and it was a challenge to effectively contribute to the planning for early recovery, address cross-cluster synergy, and improve the overall coherence of the response. The extent of predictability of cluster members remains a question mark as not all stakeholders in the relief effort understood or “bought-in” to the new methodology.

Many respondents emphasized the need for greater HQ support to enable clusters to be accountable and predictable. The development of a standardized package of required services and a surge capacity of staff with appropriate skills was identified as a need.

Another factor, which contributed to the inability to be accountable, was a lack of clarity of decision-making authority within the clusters. Most cluster-leads (coordinators) were not Heads of Agencies and did not have the delegated authority to make decisions. Furthermore, there was little consistency and structure with regards to cluster membership. Differing levels of commitment and motivation among cluster participants made it difficult for some clusters to function beyond information sharing.

Although many national and international NGOs attended cluster meetings, there was no core group and NGO representation changed frequently. Although many criticized the NGOs for lacking predictability in this regard, it was the nascent cluster system that failed to instill ownership and involvement among the NGOs. The NGOs criticized the Cluster Approach for being “UN centric” and an “exclusive club.” One person commented that, “the NGOs felt like minnows swimming amongst whales.”

Nonetheless, the Cluster Approach did successfully provide a single and recognizable framework for coordination, collaboration, decision-making, and practical solutions in a chaotic operational environment.

For the Pakistan Government the clusters provided clear divisions for areas of work. It was unanimously confirmed that the success of the overall relief effort to the earthquake turned on the extraordinary performance of the Pakistan’s Military and their effective adoption of the cluster system.

Ultimately, respondents felt that the Cluster Approach does afford increased performance for accountability, predictability, and reliability. It was clear that the possibilities for improvements in these areas are only just now being realized. One informant observed, “at least now we know who to nail to the wall if something goes wrong.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. OCHA must lead concerted efforts to mobilize resources for the Cluster Approach based on the upcoming IASC appeal so that the Global Clusters will be able to implement its planned work.*
- 2. Cluster Leads in Pakistan should establish a results-based planning and monitoring system to help identify and fill gaps. They should review performance against agreed objectives and indicators and agree on actions, implementing partners, and time frames.*
- 3. Cluster Leads in Pakistan must engage local and international NGOs in all Hubs to form a response or implementation group in order to manifest predictability.*

3. Gaps in Service, Needs Analysis, and Priority-Setting

FINDINGS:

There are varying perceptions of how the Cluster Approach contributed to priority-setting and there are good examples from some clusters such as emergency shelter, camp management, health, and food/nutrition. Priority-setting, however, did not always result in proportionate resource allocation and there was an unclear level of decision-making authority within and between clusters. Eventually the cluster concept gradually evolved and was commended for reducing duplication and over-concentration.

Inter-cluster information management and gap identification were considered to be weak as was authority for allocating resources. Data collection was not standardized although templates for needs assessment were distributed to some cluster members.

There was little evidence to suggest that the Cluster Approach improved base-line or joint needs analysis. A number of gaps (e.g. “under 50 tents” camps and settlements) were still not fully assessed after four months into the response. However, some clusters were able to quickly establish ongoing data collection such as early detection of disease outbreaks.

Overall the information management in this crisis response received low marks. The apparent disconnect between the field-hubs and Islamabad was exemplified by a lack of standardized, inter-operable and verifiable data. The Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) was criticized for locating the majority of its staff in Islamabad.

The HIC established an indicator matrix that eventually provided an overview and allowed for improved monitoring although its usefulness received mixed reviews. Some agencies lacked sufficient staff to collect complex information from multiple sources. In the case of national NGOs, the information system offered by HIC was too sophisticated and required reliable internet access.

The Camp Management Cluster worked with Pakistan's Federal Relief Commissioner and cluster members in preparing a Camp Management Strategy. While the strategy was agreed by all cluster members and formally endorsed by the Government, several issues have caused uncertainty among the clusters and have exposed a "gap" in the overall humanitarian response. In particular the determination to define camp management responsibilities as being applicable only to organized camps with more than 50 tents and accessible by road, raised the issue of "provider of last resort" when faced with the assistance gap for people not included in the camp management cluster's charge (i.e. sites with less than 50 tents). This group makes up the overwhelming majority of the earthquake affected population. Similarly, and given the cross-cutting nature of camp management, the issue of who is the "provider of last resort" of the various sector activities within the organized camps was problematic².

The realization of this significant gap in the overall response indicates that the Cluster Approach has not yet fully managed to remedy what it was conceived to do, i.e. to identify and address "gaps" in humanitarian assistance during emergencies. In the absence of a credible gap analysis, many national and international NGOs coordinated informally among themselves. A possible consequence of this ad hoc coordination was the anecdotal observation that IDPs living along main roads were more readily serviced.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Global Clusters, along with OCHA for cross-cluster issues, must establish a simple template for rapid needs assessment and establish a rollout mechanism for more detailed assessments after the initial phase.*
- 2. OCHA Pakistan must re-define the role of the Humanitarian Information Center in regards to the cluster system and include strategies for standard setting, information management, and data analysis for strategic decision-making. HIC Pakistan should relocate resources and personnel into field Hubs.*
- 3. The IASC Working Group should "further define and clarify Camp Coordination / Camp Management concepts and guiding principles" and consider a change of the current nomenclature to just Camp Coordination. This recognizes that camp management is only one function in a range of activities within this cross-cutting cluster.*
- 4. The Pakistan Camp Coordination Cluster should ensure a comprehensive programme of relief and early recovery assistance to all those in need that are not living in settlements of more than 50 tents.*

² Does "last resort" responsibility lie with the various clusters working within the camps, or is it deemed the end responsibility of the Camp Management cluster-lead?

4. Coordination, Stakeholders, Humanitarian Coordinator's role

FINDINGS:

The quality of coordination often stands or falls according to the attributes and dynamism of an individual leader. This maxim has proven just as relevant in the Cluster Approach. Examples of overwhelmed, ineffective, and over-stretched staff in leadership positions were invoked. This was cited by respondents as a significant hindrance to effective implementation of the cluster system. Cluster leads need adequate meeting facilitation skills and move the cluster meetings away from information sharing to proactive coordination and decision-making to address priorities and eliminate gaps.

Many informants criticized the Cluster Approach as merely adding bureaucracy and additional layers of organizational structure. Some heads of clusters felt that they did not have the authority to make decisions on the spot and had to consult with their heads of agency first. This hampered the decision making process. Also, several informants referred to an excessive number of cluster-related meetings and duplication with other field duty stations meetings.

Inter-cluster coordination was identified as a deficiency and OCHA was rated as having performed marginally in setting strategy and promulgating policy. At times OCHA played a minimalist role and served only as a “mailbox” rather than an active agent of cross-agency interaction. The lack of a contact and consistent interaction between field hubs and Islamabad diminished the potential of the Cluster Approach in this emergency. It was felt that the clusters functioned more efficiently in the field. They were seen as more operationally relevant and adept at mobilizing resources and identifying gaps.

Many respondents supported the expansion of the UN Country Team to an IASC Country Team as a mechanism to improve stakeholder participation and operational coherence. As recommended in the Humanitarian Response Review, “Field Humanitarian Teams” (FHTs) or IASC Country Teams, as opposed to UN Country Teams would promote reliable NGO involvement, greater coherence of the Humanitarian Coordinator system, and ultimately greater humanitarian response. NGO participation as equal partners in the IASC Country Team would also validate authority, responsibility, and predictability within the cluster system.

Although some donors were pleased to have the opportunity to be integrated in the cluster meetings, donor engagement and participation were not consistent. There was a lack of clarity on how the clusters linked to donor groups like “G7” and International Financial Institutions.

The interface between the clusters and Pakistan governmental structures functioned well despite the observation by some that “the Cluster Approach obliged the local structures to fit into UN architecture.” This comment referred to the discrepancy between the cluster formulation and the way the government ministries were organized. On the other hand, it was widely acknowledged that the Pakistan government and military's buy-in and adoption of the cluster system were a factor in

their success. Several respondents noted that the cluster structure needed to move into a government-led process as soon as possible.

Those clusters with clearly defined government counterparts were perceived to have performed the best, such as the Health Cluster, while the other clusters struggled until a designated government counterpart was identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The IASC Principals should initiate a review of coordination arrangements at country level - taking into account existing management and coordination structures (e.g. IASC CT, DMT) - aimed at reducing layers and avoiding duplication and overlapping meetings, and thus increasing effectiveness of the Cluster Approach.*
- 2. The IASC Working Group must request Agencies leading clusters to issue generic job description for their respective staff assigned to cluster coordination duties, ensuring that they are delegated the necessary authority by the Agency Country Representative to take cluster-related decisions. Such delegation of authority should reinforce their role as a neutral mediator.*
- 3. The Pakistan Country Team should initiate more robust inter-cluster contact under the existing mechanisms, especially between the Hubs and Islamabad. OCHA's role should be clarified in regards to coordination of the cluster leads and inter-cluster interaction.*
- 4. The Pakistan Cluster Leads should ensure agreement on results to be achieved within their clusters and conduct more frequent field visits to monitor and assess the results achieved and help identify measures to improve effectiveness of service delivery and coverage.*

5. Resource Mobilization

FINDINGS:

Ideally the Cluster Approach offers the possibility of greater coherence in planning and quantification of financial requirements leading to truer appeals. With the cluster leads bearing responsibility for developing consensus on priority needs and mobilizing resources for them, an equitable allocation of funding and overall cost estimation is within reach. This was attempted through the Flash Appeal and the speed of its preparation was much praised. Some NGOs however were disinclined to participate (only two NGOs had proposals in the first version) and perceived the process as lacking transparency.

Some donors thought the appeal was inaccurate and inflated. Others concluded that the clusters took too long to become functional and made their own funding arrangements or contributed directly to NGOs on the ground. One donor committed funds to the clusters, whereby the respective cluster leaders discussed among their

members how to allocate within their cluster. This approach proved a strong enabling and empowering factor for members to engage in the cluster system.

Some respondents within the UN felt that funding decisions by donors are not supportive of the new cluster initiative. There were also suggestions that an “umbrella fund” may be useful to support the cluster structure as a whole (e.g. secretariat) and fund agreed-upon key priorities.

Some respondents felt that being a lead agency and attracting resources on behalf of the cluster puts that agency in a better position to obtain funds for its own operations. This was identified as a potential conflict of interest. Many stressed the importance of neutrality as Cluster Leads, as opposed to “agency centric” behaviors. Still others felt that the cluster model diffuses their agency’s visibility and profile among a group making it harder to attract funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The IASC Working Group must clarify the potential for CERF to support funding for early deployment of dedicated Cluster Leads, Information Officers, and administrative support in each Hub as well as Cluster Specific seed funding for relief operations.*
- 2. OCHA should engage donors in Cluster Approach discussions, its strategic framework, and advocate for their support for the cost implications of this “new way of doing business.”*
- 3. OCHA, along with the Global Cluster Leads, should request participation of donors in the cluster process and in country cluster meetings.*

6. Cross-Cutting Issues, Standards, and Benchmarks

FINDINGS:

The cross cutting issues of gender, human rights, participation, environment and monitoring and evaluation appear to have fallen between the cracks of the cluster application in Pakistan. Within clusters there was no accountability for these issues and there was no cross-cluster mechanism to address them. These issues tended to get sidelined and overshadowed by the pressing demands for immediate delivery of supplies and services.

In particular, the cluster approach does not seem to have helped to foster gender discussion and to better address gender concerns in planning and implementation of the response, although some efforts have been made. Many agencies are now disaggregating data by gender, and are adopting standards that are attentive to gender disparities. Currently there is no forum or mechanism to promote gender sensitiveness in the emergency response in Pakistan.

The Concept Note, “Developing Cluster Responsibilities and Accountability,” of 12 July 2005 by the IASC ad-hoc working group on humanitarian reform identifies as accountabilities, “Planning and strategic development” through needs assessments, establishing priority actions and developing cluster implementation plans and “monitoring” to review impact and progress against implementation plans. Monitoring and evaluation can only take place within a results-based planning framework. In the absence of a planning process, monitoring has tended to be confined to data collection, development of indicators, and preparation of matrices related to processes and activities. While these serve their purposes as information sources on activities, they do not adequately support decision-making.

Cluster management guidelines issued by OCHA and approved in the cluster heads meeting in Islamabad on 28 November 2005 require that the clusters monitor the response using qualitative and quantitative indicators. While this emphasis is late for the relief phase of the emergency, it could help in preparation for the recovery phase.

The Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) is a ready vehicle to collate and disseminate critical information using a core set of standardized key performance indicators. The Integrated Monitoring Matrix prepared by HIC could be adapted for this purpose and should allow for tracking progress and informing actions to meet targets. The setting of results should be guided by a rights-based and gender sensitive check-list.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Global Cluster Leads and OCHA should provide guidelines for establishing an integrated planning, monitoring, and evaluation system including training modules on how to implement this system.*
- 2. Cluster Leads in country must train members from government and civil society on the establishment and implementation of the integrated monitoring and evaluation system and develop their capacities to implement them.*
- 3. OCHA in each emergency setting should identify focal persons or advisors for critical cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender) to provide necessary guidance to clusters and ensure that the response addresses these issues.*

7. Transition to Recovery

FINDINGS:

Many development-oriented actors interviewed welcomed the inclusion of Early Recovery in the IASC cluster architecture. In practice, however, recovery concerns were sidelined during the critical early phases of the emergency. Many of these respondents expressed concern over OCHA’s directive to focus efforts exclusively on life-saving relief.

As a result, among the Country Team, there was little receptiveness to promote an early start to the recovery efforts. Development-sensitive programming was also treated as subordinate to the overwhelming demands for life-saving interventions. The

inevitable dilemma of priorities eventually detracted and delayed the start of recovery program implementation. In this context, some respondents expressed appreciation for the up-hill efforts that occurred to quickly support strategic planning for early recovery, conduct multi-sector rapid assessments, and develop the Early Recovery Framework.

One factor that contributes to the above difficulty was a general lack of clear understanding of what the Early Recovery cluster entails. Some informants asked, “What is Early Recovery?” The lack of clear definition also made it difficult for the other clusters to determine how to relate and contribute to this cluster. There was even a perception in the field that Early Recovery actually interfered with emergency work.

Most informants considered the focus of Early Recovery to be on strategic planning, benchmarking, monitoring, and other issues falling under cluster gaps (such as environmental concerns). One interviewee summarized the role of Early Recovery as “a cluster of loose ends, an incubator of embryonic initiatives.” There were expectations that this cluster would be a manager of the recovery process and guide the transition from emergency implementation into a post-cluster structure.

In the words of a Pakistan government official, the Cluster Approach “so far has failed to address transition issues,” while the cluster model has the “potential for facilitating transition planning.”

Most respondents seemed to expect and assume that the clusters will continue beyond the emergency phase in some yet-to-be-determined form. During the emergency phase, the clusters were largely an UN-led effort but respondents in this evaluation exercise were unanimous in their conviction that the recovery effort must be led by the Pakistan Government. Beyond the emergency there is a lack of clarity on how the cluster system should evolve.

In order for the government to lead, its capacities must continue to be supported and strengthened. The UN, along with donors and International Financial Institutions, must play a role in advocating for policy change to “build back better.” The center of gravity under the recovery effort needs to move to the provinces - beyond the federal level.

There is a sense of urgency to develop a clear strategy for transition especially given the imposing presence of International Financial Institutions. One informant commented that the Country Team has to work to “earn our space” in the future government-led structure.

In an environment so heavily dominated by International Financial Institutions it will be difficult to define and promote the UN’s competencies and competitive edge in early recovery and transition efforts. There was appreciation for the UN efforts to develop guiding principles as well as to negotiate with IFIs on a broad division of roles in developing the funding appeal documents. It was felt however that the UN’s efforts were seen overshadowed by the IFIs. Clarifying respective roles in recovery and transition between the UN and IFIs was cited as a top priority. One informant commented, “Without clarifying the relationships with IFIs, it would make no difference - cluster or no cluster.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The Global Early Recovery Cluster must further clarify the scope of its work and develop a practical Early Recovery tool kit, including a standard list of typical areas of interventions, a menu of practical best practices from past recovery situations, and an inventory of available capacities and resources.*
- 2. IASC Working Group should develop options for a transition and exit strategy for the clusters established under the IASC framework.*
- 3. The IASC Principals, together with the UN Development Group, must revitalize high-level efforts to coordinate with IFIs, especially the World Bank and define the respective roles and responsibilities during the recovery period.*
- 4. The Pakistan Country Team should develop a Relief to Recovery Action Plan building on the Early Recovery Framework. Efforts should be made to coordinate with IFIs and avoid duplications with the WB/ADB reconstruction plan and relate this process to the Government-led initiative to develop a National Action Plan for Recovery.*

Evaluation Team: Soma De Silva-UNICEF, Kayoko Gotoh-UNDP, Andre Griekspoor-WHO, Iain Hall-UNHCR, Claude Hilfiker-OCHA, Jeff Labovitz-IOM, Gerald Martone-ICVA, Mohamed Zejjari-WFP

ANNEX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE: IASC Review of the Cluster Approach as Applied in Response to the South Asia Earthquake (Pakistan)

To ensure consistency and coherence - through an agreed evaluation methodology - the following set of questions will guide the IASC mission in its overall analysis, and will facilitate interviews with stakeholders:

Q-1. Has the IASC 'Cluster Approach' to the humanitarian emergency in Pakistan:

- a) Been **understood** (*incl. notions of accountability and "last resort"*)
- b) Been **applied** (*incl. how was cluster-lead determined*)
- c) Improved **predictability/reliability** of the response
- d) Improved **needs analysis** and helped **priority-setting**
- e) Improved **coordination** (*Islamabad - Hubs / HQs – Islamabad / Inter-Cluster*)
- f) Identified and **addressed** humanitarian response "**gaps**" (*incl. any information or opinion on "gaps" that remain, unresolved issues, and why they have not been resolved*)
- g) Improved **standards & benchmarks** (*information on monitoring mechanisms*)
- h) Addressed **cross-cutting issues** (*e.g. gender, participation, human rights, etc.*)
- i) Involved **stakeholders** at all levels (*i.e. Government, NGO's, agencies and organizations, beneficiaries, donors, etc.*)
- j) Improved **resource mobilization** and **operational support** (*financial and material*)
- k) Supported sector & thematic issue **capacity-development** measures
- l) Addressed **transition** from **relief to recovery** (*i.e. sector and thematic responsibilities / accountabilities from IASC humanitarian to government and development actors*)

Q-2. What is different about the 'Cluster Approach' from the sector approach?

Q-3. What is good, what is bad ... where do we adjust, amend, refine the approach?

Q-4. Has the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator evolved with the 'Cluster Approach'?

Q-5. OCHA: has its role also evolved, and where should it develop its support function?

ANNEX 2

Key Informant Contacts interviewed for this evaluation:

Tahira Abdullah – Joint Action Committee
Jean-Christophe Adrian – UN Habitat
Humera Era Afridi – Joint Action Committee
Marc Agoya – WFP
Masroor Ahmad – World Bank
Maj. Gen Nadeem Ahmed – Federal Relief Commission
Muna Ahmed – OCHA
Rex Alabama - IOM
Muhammad Bendriss Alami – UNICEF
Sheika Ali – IOM
Zulfiquar Ali – UNICEF
Maha Amhmed – WFP
Pino Annunziata – WHO
Mohammed Arif – UNHCR
Naheed Aziz – Joint Action Committee
Rafah Aziz – UNICEF
Julia Bacher – WFP
Aziz Bangesh – UNICEF
James Shepard Barron – IOM
Neil Bauman – IFRC (seconded to IOM)
William Berger – USAID
Rayana Buhaka – WHO
Tinago Chikoto – HIC
Guenet Guebre Christos – UNHCR
Philip Clarke – WFP
Rania Dagesh – OCHA
Michael Dale – EC
Rhonda Davis – USAID
Abu Diek – OCHA
Rashid Dohad – Omar Asghar Kahn Development Foundation
France Donnay – UNFPA
John Egbuta – UNICEF
Ejaz – Ministry of Health
Maliha Elahi – JAC
Mustafa Ahmad Elkanzi – IRC
Nancy Foster – CIDA
Shahida Fazil – UNFPA
Anthony Freeman – WFP
Szilard Fricska – UN Habitat
Yassine Gaba – ECHO
Emily Gish– Save the Children
Mary Guidice – IOM
Memed Gunawan – FAO
Muhannad Hadi – WFP
Larry Hollingsworth – OCHA
Maha Hussain – Concern Worldwide
Brian Isbell – UNJLC
Michael Jones – WFP
Franke de Jonge – MSF-Holland

Rana Graber Kakar – WHO
Hossein Kalali – UNDP
Brian Kelly – IOM
Rashid Khalikov – OCHA
Aslam Khan – WFP
Maj Gen Farooq Ahmad Khan – FRC
Tarig Khan – WHO
Kamal Kishore – UNDP
Chiharu Kondo – UNICEF
Wieland Kuenzel – HIC
Oliver Lacey-Hall – OCHA New York
Rachel Lavy – WHO
Simon Little – UK/DFID
Salvatore Lombardo – UNHCR
Alex Mahoney – USAID/DART
Lea Matheson – IOM
Jamie McGoldrick – OCHA
Andrew McLeod – UN Office of the RC/HC
Ekber Menemencioglu – UNHCR
Hassan Abdel Moniem – IOM
Zahidar Monzoor – UNICEF
John Moore – Canadian High Commission
Eriko Murata – Embassy of Japan
Fleming Nielsen - IFRC
Shoko Noda – UN Office of the RC/HC
Ola Nordbech – HIC
Hasan Orooj – Ministry of Health
Montserrat Pantaleoni - ECHO
Amanda Pitt - OCHA
Tim Pitt – OCHA
Angelika Planitz – UNDP
Anna Pont – UN Habitat
Gerhard Putman-Cramer - OCHA
Usman Qazi – UNDP
Maria Fernanda Quintero – OCHA
Arshad Rashid – IOM
James Reynolds – ICRC
Marion Roach – UNHCR
Sylvie Robert – Sphere
Maurice Robson – UNICEF
Arifa Saboohi – Federal Relief Commission
Munir Safieldin – UNICEF
Iram Sardar – Kashmir Education Foundation
Einar Schjolbrg – UNHAS
Hugh Smith – IOM
Yvette Stevens – OCHA
Farhana Faruqi Stocker – OXFAM
Sayed Suleiman – CONCEARLY ERN
Hallis Summers – USAID
Sarah Telford – DFID
Major Umar – UNJLC
Keith Ursel – WFP
Jan Vandemoortele – UN RC/HC
Eveline Viehboeck – OCHA
Rudolph Wabitsch – WHO

Sayda Wasib – Trust for Voluntary Organization
Geoff Wordley - UNHCR
Jennifer Worrell – UNDP
Edem Wosornu – OCHA
Haoliang Xu – UNDP
Michael Zwack – UNHCR

ToR and scope of Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation on the Application of the Cluster Approach in Pakistan

1. Rationale and main objective

The IASC WG at its late November 2005 meeting in Geneva requested an inter-agency real-time evaluation focusing on the practical implications of the Cluster Approach in Pakistan.

The main objective for this exercise is to provide real-time feed-back on the effectiveness of the Cluster Approach in Pakistan; to recommend how to reorient, if needed, the Cluster Approach in Pakistan; and to develop lessons that will inform the global development and refinement of the Cluster Approach.

2. Modus operandi

A team of 8 persons is on mission in Pakistan where it is meeting with key stakeholders who are (or should be) involved in the application of the Cluster Approach, who are:

- Cluster leads (in Islamabad and in the 4 Humanitarian Hubs)
- Members of the country team
- NGOs
- Donors (incl. Worldbank)
- Pakistan authorities (incl. FRC)
- Beneficiaries

They are doing this as well in group meetings as in personalized interviews.

3. Key issues to be addressed:

The scope of the meetings and interviews is to get answers to questions regarding:

- The understanding and application of the Cluster Approach
- Needs assessments and prioritisation
- Effectiveness and impact of the response
- Accountability and predictability of the response
- Gaps in the response
- The use of standards / benchmarks and monitoring
- The degree of involvement of all stakeholders
- The quality of coordination and leadership
- Resource mobilization
- The addressing of cross-cutting issues (gender human rights)
- Transition

4. Schedule

The team is holding meetings and interviews in Islamabad (Feb 11th-14th) as well as in the 4 humanitarian hubs (Feb. 14th-17th) and will be conducting a 3-hour restitution and validation workshop on the afternoon of February 19th, before moving to Geneva where the findings will be discussed at the IASC WG meeting on March 14th-15th.

A draft report is to be provided by February 20th and the final report as well as a discussion paper for the IASC WG is to be ready by March 3rd.

ANNEX 4

Compendium of Recommendations

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
General Recommendations (HQ)				
Recommendations to the IASC Principals				
1. <i>The IASC Principals, together with the UN Development Group, must revitalize high-level efforts to coordinate with IFIs, especially the World Bank and define the respective roles and responsibilities during the recovery period.</i>	Clarifying respective roles in recovery and transition between the UN and IFIs was cited as a top priority.	<i>IASC Principals</i>		
2. <i>The IASC Principals should initiate a review of coordination arrangements at country level - taking into account existing management and coordination structures (e.g. IASC CT, DMT) - aimed at reducing layers and avoiding duplication and overlapping meetings, and thus increasing effectiveness of the Cluster Approach</i>	Many informants criticized the Cluster Approach as merely adding bureaucracy and additional layers of organizational structure.	<i>IASC Principals</i>		
Recommendations to the IASC Working Group				
3. <i>The IASC Working Group must ensure that the Cluster Approach is incorporated in all IASC members' operations manuals, training materials, and partnership frameworks. Briefings and training must be provided to their staff, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, donors, and relevant stakeholders, including governments.</i>	The need for pre-deployment exposure and training to the Cluster Approach was blatant... Awareness and exposure to this new methodology must occur prior to deployment among all IASC members	<i>IASC Working Group</i>		
4. <i>The IASC Working Group, along with Global Cluster Lead Agencies and OCHA, should develop Cluster Toolkits for policy guidance, joint assessment and planning formats, minimum standards and benchmarks, and other relevant</i>	Some respondents suggested the need for a cluster "cook book" or tool kit as a reference guide to the field.	<i>IASC Working Group along with Global Cluster Lead Agencies and OCHA</i>		

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
<i>tools and documentation to be made accessible through a common information system in support of the field-level application of the new approach.</i>				
5. <i>The IASC Working Group should “further define and clarify Camp Coordination / Camp Management concepts and guiding principles” and consider a change of the current nomenclature to just Camp Coordination. This recognizes that camp management is one function in range of activities within this cross-cutting cluster.</i>	While the strategy was agreed upon, several issues have caused uncertainty among the clusters and have exposed a “gap” in the overall humanitarian response. In particular the determination to define camp management responsibilities as settlements with more than 50 tents.	<i>IASC Working Group</i>		
6. <i>The IASC Working Group must request Agencies leading clusters to issue generic job description for their respective staff assigned to cluster coordination duties, ensuring that they are delegated the necessary authority by the Agency Country Representative to take cluster-related decisions. Such delegation of authority should reinforce their role as a neutral mediator.</i>	Some heads of clusters felt that they did not have the authority to make decisions on the spot and had to consult with their heads of agency first. This hampered the decision making process	<i>IASC Working Group</i>		
7. <i>The IASC Working Group must clarify the potential for CERF to support funding for early deployment of dedicated Cluster Leads, Information Officers, and administrative support in each Hub as well as Cluster Specific seed funding for relief operations.</i>	It was strongly recommended that in order to put the cluster lead functions into practice, dedicated staff, preferably separate from their own agency's operational roles in the response, is required.	<i>IASC Working Group</i>		
8. <i>IASC Working Group should develop options for a transition and exit strategy for the clusters established under the IASC framework</i>	Beyond the emergency there is a lack of clarity on how the cluster system should evolve.	<i>IASC Working Group</i>		

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
<u>Recommendations to the global cluster chairs</u>				
9. <i>The Global Early Recovery Cluster must further clarify the scope of its work and develop a practical Early Recovery tool kit, including a standard list of typical areas of interventions, a menu of practical best practices from past recovery situations, and an inventory of available capacities and resources.</i>	... a general lack of clear understanding of what the Early Recovery cluster entails. The lack of clear definition also made it difficult for the other clusters to determine how to relate and contribute to this cluster	<i>Global Early Recovery Cluster</i>		
10. <i>Global cluster leads must ensure that the initiation of clusters is limited to and based on filling identified gaps and establish guidelines and an exit strategy for phasing-out of clusters.</i>	...some clusters were established where no gap existed. ...new groups were created - such as the livelihood cluster, the hygiene promotion cluster, and numerous “task forces” - creating what some have referred to as “over-clusterization.”	<i>Global cluster leads</i>		
11. <i>Global Clusters, along with OCHA for cross-cluster issues, must establish a simple template for rapid needs assessment and establish a rollout mechanism for more detailed assessments after the initial phase.</i>	There was little evidence to suggest that the Cluster Approach improved base-line or joint needs analysis. Many gaps (e.g. “under 50 camps”) were still not assessed after four months into the response	<i>Global Clusters, along with OCHA</i>		
12. <i>Global Cluster Leads and OCHA should provide guidelines for establishing an integrated planning, monitoring, and evaluation system including training modules on how to implement this system.</i>	In the absence of a planning process, monitoring has tended to be confined to data collection, development of indicators, and preparation of matrices related to processes and activities.	<i>Global Cluster Leads and OCHA</i>		
<u>Recommendations to OCHA (HQ)</u>				
13. <i>OCHA must lead concerted efforts to mobilize resources for the Cluster Approach based on the upcoming IASC appeal so that the Global</i>	With the cluster leads bearing responsibility for developing consensus on priority needs and mobilizing resources	<i>OCHA</i>		

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
<i>Clusters will be able to implement its planned work</i>	for them, an equitable allocation of funding and overall cost estimation is within reach.			
14. <i>OCHA should engage donors in Cluster Approach discussions, its strategic framework, and advocate for their support for the cost implications of this “new way of doing business.”</i>	...funding decisions by donors are not supportive of the new cluster initiative. There were also suggestions that an “umbrella fund” may be useful to support the cluster structure as a whole...	<i>OCHA</i>		
15. <i>OCHA, along with the Global Cluster Leads, should request participation of donors in the cluster process and in country cluster meetings.</i>	Although some donors were pleased to have the opportunity to be integrated in the cluster meetings, donor engagement and participation were not consistent..	<i>OCHA</i>		
16. <i>OCHA in each emergency setting should identify focal persons or advisors for critical cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender) to provide necessary guidance to clusters and ensure that the response addresses these issues</i>	The cross cutting issues of gender, human rights, participation, environment and monitoring and evaluation appear to have fallen between the cracks of the cluster application in Pakistan	<i>OCHA</i>		
<u>Specific Recommendations (Pakistan)</u>				
<u>Recommendations to Country Team:</u>				
17. <i>The Pakistan Country Team should initiate more robust inter-cluster contact under the existing mechanisms, especially between the Hubs and Islamabad. OCHA’s role should be clarified in regards to coordination of the cluster leads and inter-cluster interaction.</i>	The lack of a contact and consistent interaction between field hubs and Islamabad diminished the potential of the Cluster Approach in this emergency Inter-cluster coordination was identified as a deficiency and OCHA was rated as having performed marginally in setting strategy and promulgating policy	<i>Pakistan Country Team</i>		
18. <i>The Pakistan Country Team should develop a</i>	Clarifying respective roles in recovery and	<i>Pakistan Country</i>		

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
<i>Relief to Recovery Action Plan building on the Early Recovery Framework. Efforts should be made to coordinate with IFIs and avoid duplications with the WB/ADB reconstruction plan and relate this process to the Government-led initiative to develop a National Action Plan for Recovery.</i>	transition between the UN and IFIs was cited as a top priority	<i>Team</i>		
Recommendations to Cluster Leads:				
19. <i>Cluster Leads in Pakistan should establish a results-based planning and monitoring system to help identify and fill gaps. They should review performance against agreed objectives and indicators and agree on actions, implementing partners, and time frames.</i>	Ultimately, respondents felt that the Cluster Approach does afford increased performance for accountability, predictability, and reliability.	<i>Cluster Leads in Pakistan</i>		
20. <i>Cluster Leads in Pakistan must engage local and international NGOs in all Hubs to form a response or implementation group in order to manifest predictability.</i>	... there was no core group and NGO representation changed frequently.... it was the nascent cluster system that failed to instill ownership and involvement among the NGOs.	<i>Cluster Leads in Pakistan</i>		
21. <i>The Pakistan Camp Coordination Cluster should ensure a comprehensive programme of relief and early recovery assistance to all those in need that are not living in settlements of more than 50 tents.</i>	...have exposed a “gap” in the overall humanitarian response. In particular the determination to define camp management responsibilities as settlements with more than 50 tents	<i>Pakistan Camp Coordination Cluster</i>		
22. <i>The Pakistan Cluster Leads should ensure agreement on results to be achieved within their clusters and conduct more frequent field visits to monitor and assess the results achieved and help</i>	The lack of a contact and consistent interaction between field hubs and Islamabad diminished the potential of the Cluster Approach in this emergency.	<i>Pakistan Cluster Leads</i>		

Recommendations	Findings related	Responsibility	Priority	Deadline
<i>identify measures to improve effectiveness of service delivery and coverage.</i>				
23. <i>Cluster Leads in country must train members from government and civil society on the establishment and implementation of the integrated monitoring and evaluation system and develop their capacities to implement them.</i>	Monitoring and evaluation can only take place within a results based-planning framework. ... In order for the government to lead, its capacities must continue to be supported and strengthened.	<i>Cluster Leads in country</i>		
<u>Recommendations to OCHA:</u>				
24. <i>OCHA Pakistan must re-define the role of the Humanitarian Information Center in regards to the cluster system and include strategies for standard setting, information management, and data analysis for strategic decision-making. HIC Pakistan should relocate resources and personnel into field Hubs.</i>	Overall the information management in this crisis response received low marks. The disconnection between field hubs and Islamabad offices was exemplified by a lack of data that was standardized, interoperable, and verifiable. The HIC was criticized for locating the majority of its staff in Islamabad.	<i>OCHA Pakistan</i>		

