



# Food Security Cluster Inception Meeting Rome 30–31 May 2011



## MEETING REPORT

The purpose of the FSC Inception Meeting from 30–31 May 2011 was to formally introduce the Food Security Cluster; to review the expectations of partners; and to identify specific joint actions and processes to improve the humanitarian response in emergencies.

The meeting brought together the Food Security Cluster (FSC)<sup>1</sup> Global Support Team, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives from other global clusters and OCHA. The FSC aims to strengthen the impact of life-saving, food security responses in crisis situations and to mainstream early recovery approaches from the very outset by improving coordination of food security responses. The cluster's purpose is to respond in a manner that is proportionate, appropriate and timely and to improve the implementation and accountability of humanitarian food security responses.

**Reference documents:** Draft Terms of Reference of the Food Security Cluster

### Monday 30 May 2011

#### Opening

The meeting was opened by **Amir Abdulla, Head of Operations Unit, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)**.

Amir Abdulla provided a brief reminder that this Inception Meeting was a starting point for the FSC. He explained that NGOs have been instrumental in the development of the FSC, and thanked donors for their support. He noted the need to mainstream costs into the core budget that continued support would be needed at global level to begin strongly, and that specific funding

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<sup>1</sup> The Food Security Cluster (FSC) does not have the suffix 'Global' so as not to cause potential confusion with the global-scale mandate of the Committee on Food Security. Where FSC activities are applicable at a global scale, a lower case 'g' is used, as in gFSC.

might be needed for some crises in country. He stressed the importance of a multi-institutional approach embracing NGOs, UN, donors and host governments, as well as ensuring that Early Recovery is planned from the beginning of the emergency response. Mr Abdulla reminded the group that the FSC was already up and running and will continue to improve the effectiveness of responses to reduce suffering and save lives.

## Opening remarks and introduction

Chair of Day 1: **Megan McGlinchy, Global Food Crisis Adviser, Catholic Relief Services.**

Megan McGlinchy outlined the purpose of the meeting as well as the objectives of Day 1. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- formally introduce the Food Security Cluster,
- review the expectations of partners, and
- identify specific joint actions and processes to improve the humanitarian response in emergencies.

The objectives of Day 1 were to:

- provide an overview of the context and rationale behind the establishment of the FSC, and
- reaffirm the core functions of the FSC as identified by partners at country and global levels.

## Session 1.1

The meeting was addressed by **Laurent Thomas, Director, Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).**

Laurent Thomas applauded the creation and early work of the FSC and noted that the cluster system was implemented to pursue the partnership approach and render coordination more effective at country level. He highlighted a number of elements:

- The 2010 Cluster Evaluation II recommendation for creation of a Food Security Cluster, to integrate food aid and agriculture and livelihood into a more comprehensive system.
- Throughout 2010, FAO and WFP engaged in intensive consultations with partners to form the global Food Security Cluster (FSC).
- In December 2010, the IASC principals endorsed the creation of a FSC.
- The Global Cluster Coordinator selection terminated in March 2011 and in April 2011, Graham Farmer was appointed.
- The aim of the FSC is to address food insecurity in emergency crises in a more complete and productive way. The FSC also aims to support national level clusters so as to make a difference at country level. The FSC is about partnership for action. It is

meant to support better synergistic programming, such as when the “Survival Strategy” was developed in Pakistan in 2010. In this instance, different clusters (Food, Health, Nutrition and WASH) were assembled to guarantee better programmatic use of resources during the flood response.

- The partnership effort with different clusters brought about mutual benefits.

## Session 1.2

The meeting was also addressed by **David Kaatrud, Director of Operations, WFP.**

David Kaatrud stressed the importance of coordinating the five core areas/pillars of the cluster that have been identified collectively:

1. Surge support
2. Capacity development
3. Tools and guidance
4. Information management
5. Advocacy.

He also highlighted:

- The Cluster should enable more efficient delivery of assistance. The FSC Global Support Team has been established to support country clusters to provide:
  - Predictable capacity guided by principles of partnership.
  - Strengthened accountability including to affected populations.
  - Higher quality of strategic planning/coordination/delivery.
- The cluster needs a “flexible approach” (multiple coordination solutions depending on the context, such as with government led coordination systems).
- There is an ongoing IASC review of an accountability framework.
- Advantages of the newly formed FSC include:
  - the opportunity to learn from other clusters’ past experiences;
  - the ability to use the organic evolution of other clusters as a frame of reference to develop an active process.
- The FSC is focussed on a collective effort among partners to take things forward - to improve and save the lives of the beneficiaries.

David Kaatrud offered special thanks to the donors who contributed to a critical mass of resources with special appreciation of ECHO, DfID and the Finnish Government, who provided the FSC with the initial support necessary for implementation.

**Plenary discussion** raised a number of questions:

- What clear plans will the Cluster implement in order to guarantee, effective partnership and accountability?

- How will FSC present itself at country level?

Graham Farmer addressed these questions:

- The point of the FSC is to make country clusters more effective. Other clusters' past experiences provide a ready-made advisory service for the FSC.
- A collective effort is required to ameliorate issues regarding effective partnership and accountability.
- The IASC is undergoing a review of accountability and humanitarian coordination mechanisms as a whole.
- The FSC maintains close contact with country clusters such as the new one present in Libya.
- Inter-country cluster interaction is very important so as to be able to learn from past mistakes and successes.

**Reference documents:** Meeting Agenda

## Session 2. Context and rationale for a Food Security Cluster

**Panel members:** Richard Trenchard, Senior Programme Officer, Food Security Cluster; Brian Lander, Senior External Relations Expert, WFP; Hanna Mattinen, Senior Food Security Adviser, Action Contre la Faim; and Susanne Mallaun, Deputy Head of Unit, ECHO.

**Reference documents:** Cluster countries 2010

Each panel member presented their perspective of the process of forming the FSC and its importance within the wider IASC/ humanitarian system.

**Richard Trenchard and Brian Lander** provided a joint view. They highlighted the details of the preparatory process:

- In 2009, both WFP and FAO felt a need to change policy for the coordination of humanitarian responses.
- In 2010, FAO underwent a cluster "mapping exercise." Already FAO/WFP co-led clusters were the predominant model.
- Cluster Evaluation I and II recommended the creation of a Food Security Cluster. In early May 2009, a consultative team was created between WFP and FAO, which liaised with NGOs (in particular through 3 NGO consortia), other clusters and government entities. It was a very open process.
- The Five Pillars or core areas the cluster were then identified following these consultation.
- An online survey conducted in 2010 provided a strong indication of partners' needs. It received 201 responses. It revealed that:

- Coordination and needs assessment were the main priorities.
- 92% of survey participants supported the creation of the gFSC.

**Hanna Mattinen, ACF** noted that the expectations from ACF for the Food Security Cluster are:

- Better coordination between food aid/cash/agriculture.
- Coordinated assessments.
- Surge capacity – how will it be organized?

She offered a word of caution regarding a fear of having too many meetings at the country level that distracts from the implementation and delivery of services to the beneficiaries.

**Susanne Mallaun, ECHO Representative** informed that:

- 40% of the ECHO annual budget is devoted to food assistance.
- The EU is a strong supporter of the cluster system as a whole
- The Food Security Cluster is a unique opportunity for partnership and it should help improve humanitarian response.
- Funding comes with expectations. Some of these include:
  - That there will be leadership on guidance to country clusters
  - That there will be hands-on assistance in country – technical tools/ information management/ support to devise a comprehensive response strategy and exit strategy.
- There is a need to coordinate with other clusters. Also a coordinated scheme needs to be established with international fora such as the Committee on Food Security.
- Funding should be mainstreamed, i.e. in Flash Appeals and CAP at country level, and into the common budget of humanitarian agencies at global level.

### **Plenary discussion**

- In the discussion which followed, a number of issues were raised and/or reiterated regarding the context and rationale for a Food Security Cluster - how participants value FSC and how they see it fitting into broader humanitarian context. Issues that were highlighted included: preparedness, the need for an exit strategy (e.g. to transition into early recovery and/or sectoral coordination), the need to mainstream protection and the need for a close coordination with the Nutrition Cluster.
- The issue of preparedness and contingency planning was one of the most discussed. Some of the participants felt that preparedness is key and can be built as a cross cutting theme in all five core functions of the cluster. Others felt that clusters should be involved in emergency preparedness only after a crisis strike (to plan for a potential deterioration). It was agreed that further discussion is needed on this issue.

Comments on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) included the possibility of transitioning the country clusters into developmental issues/pursuits after the emergency ends.

## Core functional areas of the Food Security Cluster

**Presenter:** Graham Farmer, Global Coordinator, Food Security Cluster

**Reference documents:** PowerPoint presentation

The purpose of this session was to reaffirm and explain the five core functional areas of the FSC and provide an update on progress since the cluster was officially opened on 1 April 2011. The five core functional areas are:

1. Surge support
2. Capacity development
3. Tools and guidance
4. Information management
5. Advocacy.

Graham Farmer highlighted:

- The cluster is constantly evolving and represents a learning process.
- Around 44 clusters related to food security have been created at national level over the last 5–6 years. These include joint agriculture/food (aid) clusters in 30 countries. The FSC will advocate for an evolution towards food security clusters as a conceptually and operationally more robust approach, but the right to decide remains with the country.
- The role of the global cluster is to support national systems and through them, sub-national systems. If regional clusters are created, such as in the Libyan Crisis, the FSC will support them.
- Operational synergies can exist between clusters at country level (such as in the survival strategy) and we must learn from those experiences, as well as from other clusters.
- The FSC should primarily support the first 3–4 months of an emergency, because within that time, coordination should come up from the appeal process. But different types of crises (sudden onset, protracted with peaks, etc.) need to be recognised and response may vary.
- We need to learn from each operation and the FSC should be a knowledge repository.
- Need for surge fund development to put someone in quickly. There is only a small team in Rome but need to use team elsewhere (such as with the WASH cluster).
- Information management is a priority in all emergency situations.
- Tools and guidance should be prioritized aimed at supporting the teams at country level.
- Training should be tailored to country needs.
- Advocacy is needed – not only about financial resources but also about building capacity.

- Communication and information management are essential. To guarantee expertise in these services, much training and experience at field level are required.
- An issue that still needs to be addressed is how to define a limit for surge support?
- Surge fund development must be expanded if we are to be able to respond rapidly in times of crisis.

**A number of issues were raised and/or reiterated in the discussion which followed.** These included:

- How and in what way will the cluster capture best practices/lessons learned?
- Will there be regional trainings which are nationally-oriented?
- Will training also be carried out with local NGOs and local committees? What form will surge support take? Will external capacity be coming in as local capacity is built up?
- How will the rights of entitlement, such as rights to food and other human rights be managed?
- Will the cluster ensure measurable results?
- How will the cluster ensure adequate surge capacity? It is important that national actors take over to make sure the spirit of collaboration remains after the cluster de-activation.
- It is important that strong inter-cluster collaboration takes place between the FSC and all of the clusters.
- Funding is important but this must not undermine the management of other resources.
- There is a need to factor in recognition that costs can be high when the coordination solution goes to sub-national level (e.g. Pakistan), though it may be needed to ensure participation of local communities.
- In transboundary issues (eg DRC/Uganda), the FSC could help coordinate and increase communications.
- The rationale for the Food Security Clusters – breaking artificial barriers between food aid, cash, livelihood – is to be strategic about food security. How to keep this focus on strategic analysis (rather than only operational coordination)?

## Reception

A reception was hosted by the FAO for all participants of the meeting.

## Tuesday 31 May 2011

Chair of Day 2: **Daw Mohamed, Senior Adviser, Emergency Food Security, Care International.**

The Chair outlined objective of Day 2:

- To identify and agree on joint actions required to achieve the core functional priorities.

**Reference documents:** Meeting Agenda

## The role of the FSC and all of its partners in supporting country response. Panel Discussion

*Panel members:* George Aelion, Senior Programme Officer, Food Security Cluster; Allister Clewlow, Head of Food Programmes, Samaritan's Purse; Wendy Cue, Officer in Charge, Humanitarian coordination Support Section, OCHA; Nick Maunder, Sectoral Expert, Food Assistance Unit, ECHO.

Panel members were requested to present their perspectives of partner responsibilities at various stages of an emergency as the basis for ensuing discussion.

**Reference documents:** PowerPoint presentation.

### Plenary discussion

The plenary discussion reiterated / added some concerns and comments:

- Preparedness and exit strategies are important and should be built in from the beginning.
- The cluster has its strongest focus on the acute phase of an emergency but must also be thinking in a longer term time frame.
- Need to remember the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the future role and needs of the FSC.
- In Pakistan and Haiti, it was apparent that there was a damaging gap when moving from food distribution to more complex responses, wherein better planning and coordination would have helped. Quality issues are critical.
- Protection must be considered and guidelines implemented.
- There must be preparedness for the cluster to be ready to act. Its role is not to pressure humanitarian actors to go to recovery, but to urge donors into joint planning to get funds.
- In Haiti it would have helped if there had been a coordination strategy between small NGOs at national level. There was insufficient coordination between the UN system and, for example, USAID.
- The Nutrition Cluster noted that preparedness must take into account the context in country – for example, in Haiti the rain etc. in relation to diarrhea and diseases and in Pakistan, with flood and winter coming, the situation of the population in cold conditions.



- NGOs have different expectations. It is reasonable to expect better coordination, but NGOs have their own priorities, as do UN Agencies. The mandates of all partners need to be respected, including for example matters relating to civil-military collaboration.

Capacity building and surge response for countries in crisis. Identifying available capacity and gaps.

**Reference documents:** Presentations from the four break-out group; List of participants of the groups

Four discussion groups were created and active discussion ensued. All groups presented their rich findings to the plenary and their PowerPoint presentations will be maintained on the FSC website. The plenary discussions elicited some additional points for consideration:

### **Group 1 – Surge Capacity**

- There is a need to quickly define the context and needs of an emergency response as one size does not fit all.
- When experts and surge team members are not employed in a particular crisis, they could offer support in protracted crisis.
- There should be little separation between UN agencies and NGOs as they are partners. Mapping exercises can be applied to all agencies.
- Commitment and mechanisms that allow NGOs to invest in participation in country coordinator level should be a priority. Can the FSC learn from other clusters and standardise approaches?

### **Group 2 and 3 – Capacity Building – Operational/technical**

- It is important that the FSC is aware of the work of the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force. The purpose of the NATF is to harmonise and promote cross-sector needs assessment initiatives for consistent, reliable and timely data on humanitarian needs in sudden-onset crises to strengthen informed decision making and improve humanitarian response.
- The FSC should not impose standard assessment tools for all country clusters, but it can show the tools that are available and, where gaps are identified, develop tools for use as appropriate by the country clusters.
- It was felt that it is better to use the term FSC partners rather than ‘members’ to allow for wider participation at both country and global levels.
- It is important that the FSC terms of reference are finalized.
- Should the FSC look in to country registration of partners? If there is to be a registration process, it must not be too formal and country specific, at which point it falls under the remit of the national cluster and not the FSC.

- It is important not only to engage with government but for them to co-lead clusters, within the realm of Humanitarian Principles. As with all clusters, it is important not to create parallel systems, but to build on what already exists.

#### **Group 4 – Capacity Building – Coordination:**

- In countries with strong governments, clusters will take notice of government's view. Where the government is strong, it can lead the cluster. There is an identified need to support different scenarios and have tools that support each scenario
- Parallel clusters in Haiti made work difficult because they did not necessarily share the same objectives. There are times where government goes against humanitarian principals. Government role and participation is contextual.
- There is a need for practical, field-proven tools. The important role of country level clusters in developing tools is not to be overlooked.

A plenary discussion followed on all the presentations and some further points were raised:

- There is a need to talk about cluster system at large. TOR has to reflect a collective strategy and how to ensure a common voice.
- The identified list issues would keep the FSC working for at least the next three years, so how will the FSC establish priorities?

#### Defining the FSC longer-term plan of action. How do we proceed?

*Presenters:* Daw Mohamed, Senior Adviser, Emergency Food Security, Care International; Graham Farmer, Global Coordinator, Food Security Cluster.

Note was taken of issues in the '**Parking lot**' for further consideration:

Over the two days of the meeting, five issues were placed by the participants on the 'parking lot'.

- **Effective partnership**
  - If partnership is not effective, this must be communicated to the cluster generally.
- **Accountability**
  - Discussion will be taken forward. It is on the broader conceptual side of the cluster in coordination with wider IASC discussion.
- **How do we include DRR into cluster context?**
  - With preparedness. In terms of DRR, it has to be active interventions. The debate has highlighted a range of opinions but tended towards DRR and possibly an example from the education cluster check list approach as to what DRR means before, in and after operation.
- **Exit strategy**
  - Should be explicit and adhered to from day one. The FSC needs an approach to recommend, which needs to remain context specific.
- **Flash Appeals and Consolidated Appeals Processes**

- Given the variety of cluster structures, should appeal documents be structured under a food security approach or have separate sections, such as ‘food’ and ‘agriculture but with joint analysis’?
- Combined food security sections were recommended, along with the promotion of and support for joint analysis.

### **The way forward**

This FSC inception meeting has formally introduced the global Food Security Cluster; reviewed the expectations of partners; identified joint actions and processes to improve the humanitarian response in emergencies.

It is planned to hold the first Annual Meeting of all FSC partners in October of this year. At that time, specific activities and a work plan will be agreed providing guidance and benchmarks for 1–3 years.

The results of this meeting (in particular the results stemming from the break-out groups) as well as other consultations with partners will be incorporated into a draft work plan by the FSC Team and circulated to all FSC partners for input before the October meeting. The details of this plan will be discussed among the FSC partners at that meeting.

### **Plenary discussion**

The Chair asked the plenary for response to the proposed plan: to indicate level of support and whether/not it captured concerns of all parties.

- Further clarity requested regarding: who would work full time on cluster issues? Would the FSC meeting be an open or closed forum? What level of authority has this body? Emergency directors of WFP and FAO – what role do they have? What are the roles and responsibilities of different groups?
- A Strategic Advisory Group from a group of partners working on work plan might be a way forward to help ensure the continued input from partners.
- Need to clarify how FSC and Nutrition will work in field.
- The responsibilities of clusters at country-level need to be incorporated in plans with list of deliverables and activities
- The FSC team were requested to:
  - revise the cluster TORs and distribute to all participants for comments by the end of June 2011, and
  - circulate the summary of this meeting.
- The October annual meeting of the FSC will consider the scope of work for 2012.

This process was agreed by the plenary.

### **Provisional dates for next meeting?**

The plenary agreed to hold the first meeting of the Food Security Cluster in October 2011.

### **Conclusion**

***Presenters:*** Megan McGlinchy, Global Food Crisis Adviser, Catholic Relief Services; Daw Mohamed, Senior Adviser, Emergency Food Security, Care International; Graham Farmer, Global Coordinator, Food Security Cluster.

**Megan McGlinchy:** The meeting organisers were thanked. The FSC team was urged to represent the opinion of NGOs and push for continued commitment of NGOs in cluster architecture in order to ensure that work is easier and more effective. There is a need to remember that the cluster is not an end product. The aim must be to achieve more of a collaborative effort. Clusters need to respect values of each participant, not to become too prescriptive. Food security is not a single sector. All sectors of response are important and have different expertise.

**Daw Mohammed:** There are great advantages in learning from other clusters and others' experience to avoid mistakes. It is important to identify priority areas and to have effective communication in order to motivate and recognise the diversity of members/participants. There is a lot of diversity among members, which needs to be considered.

**Graham Farmer:** It had been wonderful to see the FSC launched as a service and a better resource for people in need. The FSC was now operational.

### **Closure**

David Kaatrud, Laurent Thomas thanked all participants and closed the meeting.