



GLOBAL
FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER
Strengthening Humanitarian Response

Lessons Learned in the Philippines Food Security and Agriculture Cluster

Exercise conducted by the global Food Security Cluster

Synthesis Report

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1. Executive Summary

On 9 November 2013, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines welcomed international assistance in response to the devastating impact of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda). A level 3 Corporate Emergency was declared by FAO and WFP on 12 November, 2013 and the IASC Principles declared a Level 3 System-Wide Emergency Response on the same day. To ensure efficient coordination of humanitarian action, the Humanitarian Country Team in the Philippines confirmed that FAO and WFP as Cluster Co-Lead Agencies of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), should continue to work jointly through the cluster system. A national hub was first established in Manila and two sub-national teams have been deployed in Tacloban and Roxas City all consisting of a Cluster Coordinator and an Information Management Officer.

Some of the main lessons learned that transpired from this intervention include the importance of adequate preparedness mechanisms to ensure efficient and timely rapid response deployments at both national and sub-national levels. Strong government relations and effective support of existing coordination structures has also proved to be crucial and impacting the efficiency of the response.

Suggestions on improved inter-cluster collaboration as well as Information Management functions have been explored to ensure a well-coordinated, timely and informed response to food security emergencies.

The food security response was further complemented by a number of related cross-cutting programmes that centered on increasing community consultations to ensure greater accountability to the affected populations; restoring urban livelihoods and existing assets through cash interventions among others.

Similarly the quality of the response provided was the result of an innovative and interactive communications strategy that involved a number of proactive humanitarian actors accustomed to new-school social media communication tools.

2. Methodology

The findings in this report are the result of consultations with all major actors involved in the response including WFP/FAO Co-Leading Agencies (CLAs); NGO partners at national and sub-national levels; government representatives; civil society organizations; clusters and other UN agencies.

A Lessons Learned mission took place and several interviews were conducted with all stakeholders and with the FSAC team at both national and sub-national levels as well as with the co-leading agencies in their regional offices.

Consultations were also conducted among partners at the gFSC level, as many of them have been directly involved in the response and in the FSAC activities at field level.

The quality and added value of these findings can also be drawn from discussions with a number of programme quality partners with a focus on accountability to affected populations; cash response modalities and specific urban food security and livelihoods issues, which contributed to promoting a more harmonized food security response.

3. Preparedness & Rapid-Response Deployment

An adequate preparedness phase and activities are crucial to ensure an efficient and timely rapid response to an L3 emergency. Preparedness measures include identifying teams that devote time to research, data collection, networking and advocacy initiatives with a national and regional focus.

Training and availability of potential candidates for rapid deployments and establishment of partnerships are also important elements to avoid delays and ensure the quality of the response.

Given the urgency of the situation and the high number of humanitarian actors involved, the gFSC had to conduct an extremely rapid activation of FSAC and deployment of qualified personnel to guarantee an immediate response to coordination needs. Through consultations with WFP/FAO Regional Bureaus and

global partners and the support from gFSC regional focal point, the GST was able to deploy of the first FSAC members in a very timely and efficient manner.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned:

3.1 The focal point for the region and the country within the gFSC was appointed and responsible for related key tasks including gather information on the structure and composition of coordination mechanisms present in country prior to the emergency in order to avoid duplications, assess existing capacities and better align with the Government structures; regularly update contact lists to include information on government counterparts, FAO, WFP and country partners representatives; liaise with Co-Leading Agencies Regional Bureaus to advocate for Cluster needs and send clear messages on Cluster roles and functions. However the appointment of the regional focal point could have been done at an earlier stage to allow for better preparedness activities and decrease efforts of the FSC Team on the field.

3.2 In particular, a deeper knowledge of existing governmental coordination structures and preparedness plans developed by the National DRR and Management Council, such as the Food and NFI Cluster led by DSWD and the Agriculture Cluster led by DA, could have helped the team on the ground to take the proper actions and directions to ensure a holistic, coherent response and an effective handover/exit strategy for the Cluster. This was crucial being the Philippines a middle income country and the Government having a strong capacity and very organized structures in place.

3.3 Although the participation of the government in FSAC activities and meetings at the Manila level was not strong, FSAC effectively contributed in bringing together Government units, DSWD and DA, to discuss greater food security issues with a harmonized approach. The participation was higher at the sub-national levels and particularly in Tacloban where DSWD and DA often chaired FSAC meetings. Having the government involvement has been well appreciated by partners and extremely useful for info sharing and advocacy purposes.

3.4 Preparedness activities also include ensuring that a prepared/trained and available pool of cluster coordinators and IM officers is in place to efficiently respond to emergencies. The gFSC has proved to be very efficient and flexible in identifying deployable staff even before the declaration of a corporate and system-wide Level 3 emergency. gFSC trainings and established networks proved to be vital in this regard. However the deployment process would have been more efficient if a formal gFSC Roster of trained Coordinators and IMOs was in place allowing for the full-time release of partners from their agency.

3.5 Preparedness mechanisms such as existing Stand-by Partnerships and MOUs with Samaritan's Purse and HelpAge International proved very useful on this occasion and contributed to the rapid response deployment of key actors familiar with the cluster system. Greater thought should be given to augmenting these Stand-by Agreements, specifically for Level 3 Emergencies.

3.6 The majority of FSAC staff did an excellent job that has been highly appreciated by partners and CLAs. Coordinators were able to play an independent and neutral role and be very effective in enhancing participation and bringing together different stakeholders to address specific food security issues. IM Officers played a significant role in collecting and sharing adequate and timely information among cluster partners. The professionalism and technical expertise of the IMOs proved to be extremely valuable in such a critical emergency. However some of the Coordinators and IM Officers deployed did not go through any training and lacked cluster experience and this created some confusion on the roles and responsibilities.

3.7 It was suggested that gFSC Cluster Coordinators and IMOs trainings should also enhance soft skills and specific technical IM skills such as GIS and database management. Partners also highlighted the need for trainings to include greater guidance on implementation of the IASC Protocols. This would allow NGOs and other partners who are not familiar with cluster and FAO/WFP procedures to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings regarding reporting lines and accountability issues.

3.8 Two sub-national clusters/teams were activated in Tacloban and Roxas City shortly after the Manila hub was established. Both teams included a Coordinator and an IM Officer. These hubs also responsible for other sub-hubs areas and regularly organized cluster meetings in these locations to ensure a full coverage of coordination needs. However, the sub-national clusters should have been activated more rapidly to ensure

an immediate response coordination. Particularly in Roxas, the FSAC team came at a later stage and the initial coordination role was taken on by a NGO partner. This practice proved to be extremely useful and effective and ways should be explored on how this mechanism could be structured/conceptualized and applied elsewhere to address the potential initial lack of cluster capacity in an emergency context.

3.9 According to country teams and partners' feedback, the Global Support Team (GST) has been flexible and efficient in providing immediate support to the deployed teams. A Philippines Support team was immediately identified and a Communication/IM structure put in place. Additionally, even before the team was on ground gFSC was able to quickly mobilize its global partners network to identify 3Ws which provided background information to the deployed team to make contacts and understand where the cluster partners were heading. Global partners also started contributing to the gFSC work in a very prompt and comprehensive manner, through systematic information sharing and attendance to weekly teleconferences.

3.10 The gFSC Coordinator surge support mission to the Philippines in December was highly appreciated and particularly helpful during the SRP conception phase and for advocating for specific actions with the CLAs.

4. Coordination & Response Quality

Despite the rapid pace of the Level 3 Emergency Response in the Philippines, the coordination and quality of the response has been uniquely enhanced by a combination of factors such as transparent and highly participatory meetings; regular collection and analysis of assessments; collaboration with a number of quality programming groups and stakeholders to ensure attention to cross-cutting issues; strong participation of civil society organizations to strengthen accountability to affected populations; establishment of ad-hoc technical Working Groups and inter-cluster collaboration among others.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned:

4.1 FSAC tasks in assessments include keeping the registry up to date as well as compilation and analysis of findings. IMO's proved to be efficient in fulfilling these functions, however given that the workload could be very heavy in an L3 emergency, the GST played a supportive role in this process and have helped in the compilation of findings, especially with the first phase of the MIRA. This practice could be an example of support from the global level to country clusters in an emergency and ways could be explored on how to conceptualize it and use it in future emergencies.

Additionally, a broader and regular use of gFSC indicators by cluster partners could help in minimizing duplication of efforts and a proper advocacy is needed for this purpose.

4.2 FSAC meetings at both national and sub-national levels proved to be very well organized and a useful forum to bring all stakeholders at the same table and discuss common approaches. Meetings were organized on a weekly basis and minutes were disseminated in a very timely manner. Participation has always been very heterogeneous and high reaching an average of 30/35 organizations each time. The majority of partners felt that their feedback was strongly taken into consideration in the agenda and discussions in meetings as well as in defining greater strategies of the Cluster. In particular FSAC did a good job in organizing brainstorming sessions on the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) bot at national and sub-national levels.

4.3 FSAC sub-national meetings have been qualitatively enhanced by government participation including DA, DSWD, BRFA, PCA units, who regularly shared needs assessments; damage reports; needs vs gaps reports that benefited planning and implementation of partners' programmes.

4.4 Technical Working Groups, Fisheries and Coconut, were established under FSAC and proved to be extremely useful for partners to map presence and capacity of other stakeholders and coordinate on interventions.

4.5 Engagement of civil society organizations and national NGOs in FSAC activities has been very strong. The ability of FSAC to ensure their involvement has been highly appreciated by international partners and on the other hand, civil society organizations found FSAC meetings very useful for their decision making and FSAC teams being very open to receiving their feedback and inputs. Other engagement mechanisms for

national NGOs included a Workshop in Manila; participation in OCHA trainings; briefings in sub-national hubs; sharing contacts between international and national NGOs and working with them on monitoring purposes. Community-based engagement has been particularly proactive with quality programming groups such as Age and Disability task force and women's groups helping to ensure stronger accountability to affected population and inclusion of cross-cutting issues.

4.6 With regards to mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, several measures were undertaken by FSAC including engaging with GenCap, WFP protection officer, Age Disability Task Force for the SRP; compiling secondary data on cross-cutting issues in assessments and providing related inputs to MIRA; inviting OCHA gender and accountability coordinators to attend FSAC meetings and provide technical support to partners; developed and disseminated a safe distribution check list as well as a monitoring tools to capture cross-cutting and protection issues. Evidence on how these tools were used by partners is currently being collected by FSAC teams to enhance good practices and improve related activities. A regular exchange of information with the Communication with Community Working Group was also ensured to gather feedback and complaints arising from various community consultations so that partners could look into ways to address such concerns.

4.7 FSAC stressed the importance of inter-cluster coordination in the Philippines. FSAC interactions with the Nutrition Cluster in-country included identifying beneficiary selection criteria to ensure nutrition support by WFP for children (0-60 months) and pregnant and lactating women; consolidating kcal values of various food baskets provided by DSWD, WFP and other FSAC actors; sharing 3/4ws related information on nutrition provided by FSAC partners including nutrition support to elderly provided by WFP in partnership with IMC and HelpAge. The Global FSC in turn advocated for a more coordinated approach to the response by holding teleconferences with the Global Nutrition Cluster to discuss key issues on the ground. Good collaboration and interaction was also established with WASH, Shelter and Protection Clusters.

4.8 An inter-cluster, multi-sectoral Cash Working Group operational group was also originated in the Philippines and proved to be useful in strengthening existing partnerships to undertake activities such as emergency employment through cash-for-work and cash for community asset recovery. These activities ensured that the critical food and non-food needs of the affected populations were met to save lives, restore livelihoods and facilitate better food access and availability.

4.9 Response quality was further enhanced in the Philippines from the support of gFSC Urban Livelihoods Working Group to partners' activities specifically addressing food security, housing and recovery of livelihoods in urban settings. These activities, while not directly linked to FSAC work, complemented the food security response and helped in drawing some ad-hoc lessons learned in the urban humanitarian response. A specific report has been produced by the Urban WG.

5. Information Management & Communications

Information Management (IM) plays a crucial role in the Cluster's ability to effectively coordinate food security response as it helps the partners to identify possible gaps and overlaps. In an emergency situation, where data can change in a very rapid way, it is necessary to ensure structured IM mechanisms and tools for regular and appropriate information flows. Effective communication between the cluster team and the partners (both at the global and the country levels) is needed to ensure a coordinated response.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned:

5.1 Partners complimented FSAC team for their availability and flexibility and for ensuring adequate and constant communications and information sharing. All documents, maps, guidelines and assessments shared by the IMO were confirmed to be useful for decision making purposes both at national and global levels. IPC and Seasonal Livelihoods Planning (SLP) information was also shared at FSAC meetings.

5.2 Reporting mechanisms and tools such as the 3/4Ws proved to be conducted in a very efficient manner and resulted in extremely useful tools to avoid duplications. A good example of this has been the information sharing between ICRC and WFP through FSAC tools which led to an improved and coordinated assistance to 11 municipalities in Samar. However, due to the rapid changing of information and difficulty for partners in sending data on such a frequent basis, sometimes the information received through the 3/4Ws was not up to date and needed double checking by partners.

5.3 Although division of roles and activities were identified between the FSAC and the Early Recovery & Livelihoods Cluster, partners had difficulty in understanding reporting lines and this has generated some confusion that led to delays and duplications, particularly for the planning and reporting of livelihoods activities and cash interventions. More clarity on specific implemented activities to be reported under each Cluster and agreements on possible issues arising from those could have been established in advance. It is also important to address these types of issues to better face the post-emergency phase in which the recovery of livelihoods becomes more and more relevant.

5.4 At the global level, the GST organized ad-hoc teleconferences with the global partners to share information on the evolving situation and partner responses. The teleconferences were considered particularly useful at the early stages of the response. In addition to teleconferences, information was shared through regular email updates and website, both considered valuable by the global-level partners. As an additional means to share information, the GST also piloted Facebook group and a Twitter account. The steady increase in account followers suggests these tools were considered beneficial, and pilot-testing those for the Philippines response gave the GST useful information how to better use these tools in the future responses.

ANNEX 1 – Glossary of Terms

BRFA – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

CaLP – Cash Learning Partnership

CAP – Consolidated Appeals Process

CLAs – Cluster Lead Agencies

CTP – Cash Transfer Programming

DA – Department of Agriculture

DSWD – Department of Social Welfare and Development

ERL – Early Recovery & Livelihoods Cluster

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

FSAC – Food Security and Agriculture Cluster

gFSC – Global Food Security Cluster

GST – Global Support Team

HCT – Humanitarian Country Team

IASC – Inter-Agency Standing Committee

IM – Information Management

IPC – International Phase Classification

MIRA - Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment

MOUs – Memorandums of Understanding

OCHA – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PCA - Philippines Coconut Authority

PCM – Program Cycle Management

SRP - Strategic Response Plan

TORs – Terms of Reference

WFP – World Food Programme