



ANNUAL REPORT 2014



GLOBAL
FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER
Strengthening Humanitarian Response

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1. Introduction

Food Security Cluster coordinates the food security response in humanitarian emergencies by addressing the issues of food availability, access and utilization.

This report presents the achievements of the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) against its work plan in 2014 and provides evidence on gFSC's contribution to increasing aid effectiveness in humanitarian emergencies.

Why is food security coordination important? With food security representing over forty percent of the global humanitarian appeal in 2015, it is by far the largest sector with funding requirements and actors involved.

The recent FAO/WFP joint evaluation of Food Security Cluster provides evidence on the impacts of food security coordination in 2009-14 by summarizing: "coordination mechanisms assessed made consistent, positive contributions by facilitating networking and helping to build trust; reducing duplication of efforts; enhancing reporting; and, in some cases, setting and disseminating standards. By avoiding duplication and enabling humanitarian organizations to redirect resources, food security coordination had a positive effect on the coverage of services provided".

In 2014, the humanitarian community faced system-wide Level 3 emergencies in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Philippines, South Sudan and Syria. In addition, the Ebola

response in West Africa challenged the humanitarian partners while protracted humanitarian crises continued in several countries, such as in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia and Yemen. Thirty-four official Food Security Clusters, sectors and other coordination solutions were in place globally. New clusters were established in Liberia and Ukraine, a new sectoral coordination mechanism was set up in Myanmar and a new coordination structure was established for the 'Whole of Syria' operation in an effort to improve the effectiveness and operational reach of the collective response.

At country-level, food security coordination costs represent only 0.28 percent of the total food security sector humanitarian appeals in 2014. When donors contribute US\$100 for a food security intervention in any given crisis, US\$0.28 is required to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated, efficient and effective response.

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Photo: FAO/Jean Nestor Bobongo

The role of the gFSC support team is to provide guidance and support to country-level clusters. To ensure that there is a pool of trained and experienced cluster coordinators and information managers ready to be deployed to humanitarian emergencies, gFSC organizes trainings and manages a roster. In 2014, gFSC support team succeeded in ensuring that there were no gaps in country cluster operations. When needed, gFSC team conducted missions to fill in the role of cluster staff or tapped into partner resources to deploy cluster coordinators and information managers through various partnership arrangements. At global level, gFSC advocates for country clusters and partners to ensure that the needs of gFSC and its partners are reflected in the IASC Transformative Agenda and the wider humanitarian architecture.

Through gFSC working groups, efforts to improve food security programming continued. The working groups focused on the inter-linkages between nutrition and food security; urban issues; cash and markets; and programme quality, including accountability to

affected populations (AAP), gender, age and disabilities mainstreaming.

At present, gFSC includes thirty-eight partners: international NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and UN organizations. gFSC welcomed COOPI as a new partner.

In 2014, gFSC organized its work around four pillars, as identified in the 2013-2014 Strategic Plan:

- **Operational and surge support to national clusters**
- **Capacity development in support of national clusters**
- **Information management and learning**
- **Advocacy, communication and partnerships**

Preparing to meet the humanitarian challenges of tomorrow, the next two-year period will be guided by a new Strategic Framework, which was developed in consultation with gFSC partners.

Examples of gFSC achievements in 2014:



gFSC support team succeeded in ensuring **no gaps in country cluster operations** through surge missions and facilitating deployments of staff through the gFSC Roster and partnership arrangements.



By organizing trainings and managing a roster, the gFSC has been able to **increase readiness for L3 and other emergencies**. In total, seventy-three candidates were trained at Cluster Coordinator trainings and forty-four candidates participated in the Information Management trainings.



Development of **web-based IM Tool** was finalized. By producing standard reports and maps, IM tool visualizes gaps and overlaps in food security response and facilitates strategic resource allocation.



gFSC working groups contributed to the continual improvement of food security programming at country-level. By tapping into the country-level experiences, working groups produced global-level tools and guidance, which were then provided back to the field level.



2. Operational and surge support to national clusters

gFSC deploys staff for new crises and peaks of chronic emergencies as cluster coordinators and information managers to strengthen coordination, accountability and leadership and to support improved programme quality with gender, protection, age and disabilities mainstreaming.

In 2014 gFSC Support Team conducted:
18 surge missions and
10 capacity support missions in
15 countries

Surge missions guarantee that food security response is coordinated from the very onset of new emergencies and that there is continuity of coordination in protracted crises.

Capacity support missions are meant to ensure that national clusters are fulfilling core cluster functions and that cross-fertilisation with other clusters is promoted.

These demand-driven missions can provide strategic, senior-level advice on cluster activation or guidance in reviewing coordination arrangements and enhancing the day-to-day running of the cluster. At the request of country clusters, gFSC team also organizes trainings for cluster partners on strategy development, assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and information management.

In 2014, five countries were facing system-wide L3 emergencies: the Central African Republic, Iraq, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. New formal clusters were activated in Liberia and Ukraine, a new sectoral coordination mechanism was set up in Myanmar and a new coordination structure was established for Whole of Syria.

Central African Republic (L3)

In December 2013, following civil unrest and population movements, a system-wide L3 emergency was declared in the Central African Republic. Food Security Cluster's (FSC) capacity to respond was rapidly scaled up to address the increased coordination needs.

During 2014, FSC, consisting of approximately fifty partners, continued its activities to coordinate food assistance and agricultural sector activities. FSC provided support to partners and other key stakeholders by

managing information flow and data analysis, which contributed to identifying gaps and avoiding duplications in the response. FSC guided the response both from strategic and operational points of view and facilitated food security assessments and analysis. The cluster also played a key role in organizing the agricultural campaign where WFP, FAO and partner NGOs worked together to support crisis-hit farming families with seeds and tools distribution as well as emergency food rations to reduce the risk that desperate families would eat the seeds instead of planting them.

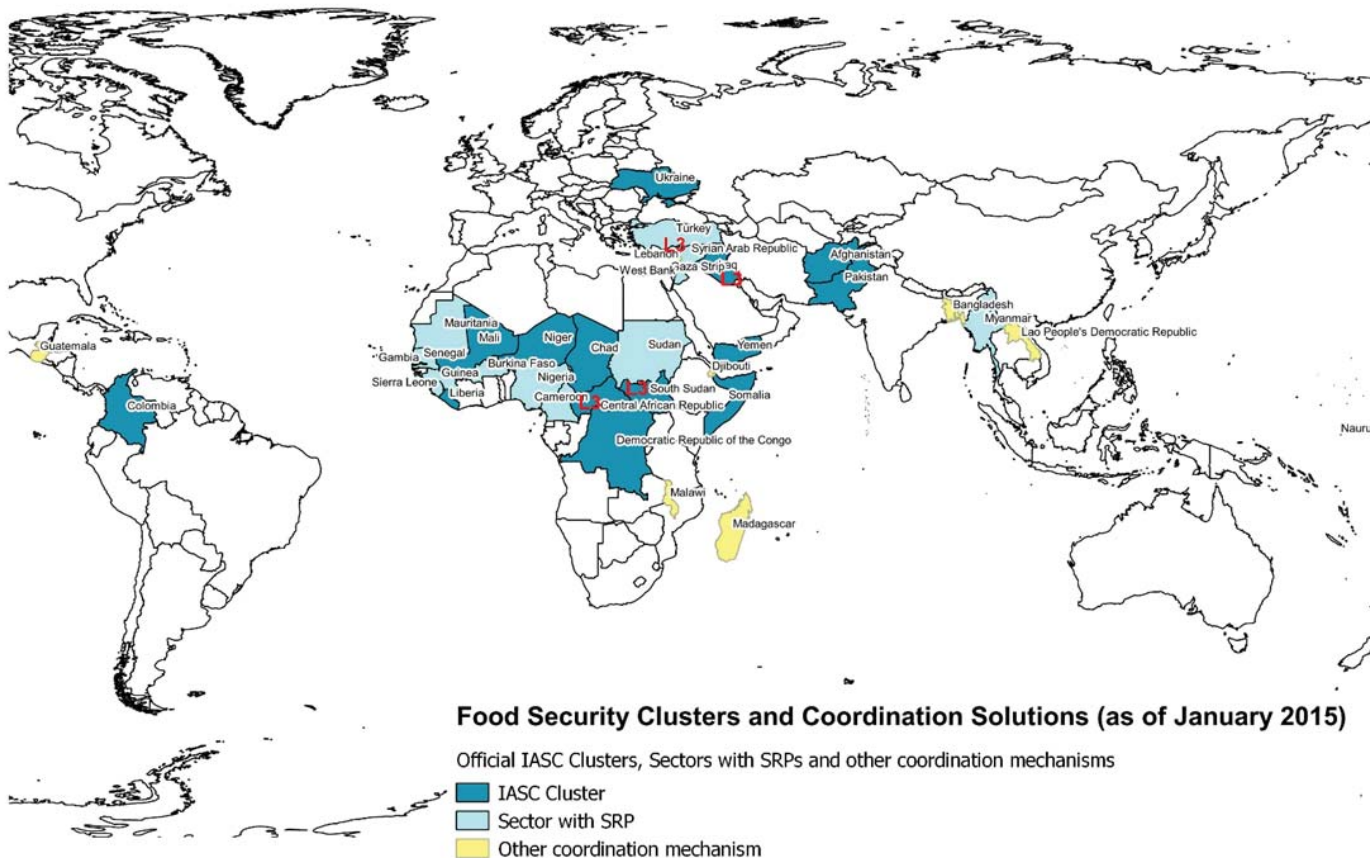
Another focus area of FSC was to scale up presence and capacity of cluster partners at sub-national level in the provinces to improve the delivery of assistance to people in need in remote areas. The gFSC team contributed to the country cluster's work through support missions and by facilitating the recruitment of cluster staff, ensuring that there were no gaps in the cluster's operation. To foster learning and cross-fertilization of knowledge across different countries, gFSC also documented the lessons learned from the emergency.



Photo: Roberta Canulla/gFSC

Global Overview of Food Security Clusters in 2014

34 Food Security Clusters, sectors and coordination mechanisms around the world



Average country profile¹:



Food Security Sector funding requirements: US\$312 million



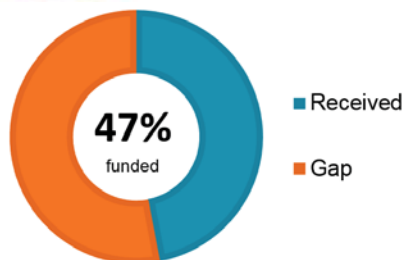
2.76 million people targeted within Food Security Sector



68 Food Security Partners



Coordination costs: US\$865,000 required



Coordination costs out of sector requirements:



¹Average profile is calculated based on data available from 15 Food Security Clusters/Sectors with SRPs as listed on the Draft gFSC Dashboard, as of September 2014.



Iraq (L3)

The situation in Iraq escalated in June and on 14 August 2014, a system-wide L3 emergency was declared as tens of thousands of people were forcibly displaced by the conflict. To strengthen the cluster response in line with the existing sector and refugee responses, gFSC deployed two global support team members to Erbil as Cluster Coordinators between June and August. This contributed to ensuring a coherent, coordinated and integrated humanitarian response driven by the food security needs of affected populations, assessed in consultation with them. gFSC team provided further support to the cluster through a mission and by facilitating staff deployments.

Liberia (new cluster)

In 2014, the world witnessed an unprecedented Ebola outbreak affecting five countries in West Africa and threatening to compromise the social, political and economic fabric of the sub-Saharan African region, while also impacting the food security situation. In Liberia, gFSC provided surge support to set up a Food Security Cluster in September to create a forum, which brings together national and international humanitarian partners to improve the timeliness and impact of food security assistance for Ebola-impacted communities. The objective of the cluster is to improve immediate household availability of and access to food. In particular, the cluster helps ensure coherent, coordinated and integrated humanitarian responses driven by the assessed food security needs of the affected people.

Myanmar (new sector)

At the request of the Lead Agencies in country, gFSC team carried out a support mission in November 2014 to explore and support the establishment of a joint food security coordination mechanism. The purpose was to ensure more efficient coordination as food security and related livelihoods issues had previously been addressed under separate coordination structures. The creation of the Myanmar Food Security Sector (FSS), co-led by WFP and FAO, was endorsed on 21 November, soon followed by the first FSS partners' meeting in Yangon. gFSC also assisted in the finalization of the 2015 Strategic Response Plan and the new FSS response plan. To sustain the FSS initial set-up and implementation through 2015, immediate initiatives were launched to secure donor and/or stand-by partner support in order to have a Coordinator in place as of early 2015, aligned with the country's humanitarian response plan.

Philippines (L3)

Following the destruction caused by Typhoon Haiyan, clusters, including the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) were activated in November 2013 with the declaration of a system-wide L3 emergency. Clusters were deactivated in July 2014 and subsequently FSAC transitioned into government-led coordination structures for recovery and rehabilitation activities.

The gFSC support team assisted FSAC in ensuring a coordinated response by deploying a team member as a sub-national Coordinator



in Tacloban, which was one of the worst affected areas. Further support was provided by facilitating staff deployments. To capture the lessons learned, the team visited Philippines to analyse the food security coordination of the response and specifically its urban aspects. In addition, one team member assisted the FSAC team by preparing the Food Security Cluster Strategic Response Plan's first periodic monitoring report on the outcome indicators, including liaising with partners to formulate an agreeable data collection methodology, gather and analyse data.

South Sudan (L3)

The conflict that began in December 2013 continues to affect the lives of millions of people. It has been marked by brutal violence against civilians and suffering across the country. A system-wide L3 emergency was declared in February 2014 and consequently, the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, first activated in 2012, strengthened its presence. As a result of the joint efforts by the cluster partners supporting the population in need with food and livelihoods inputs, encouraging signs of an improving situation in some areas could be seen in late 2014. Yet, humanitarian aid remains constrained and the food security outlook for 2015 is of great concern. The gFSC team assisted the cluster by deploying staff to assist in strengthening coordination. Thanks to a stand-by agreement, gFSC was able to increase the cluster's information management capacity by deploying two Information Managers from Samaritan's Purse. Further assistance was provided by facilitating additional staff deployments.

Syria Response (L3)

The sustained and escalating violence in Syria has resulted in a large number of casualties, massive destruction of homes and infrastructure, and disruption of essential services. To address the critical needs of the affected populations in Syria, a small working group of food security actors was established in Damascus by WFP and FAO in January 2013



Photo: Giulio d'Adamo/WFP

Photo: Marcus Prior/WFP



as the Food Security Cluster was not formally activated. In June 2013, a Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group was established in South Turkey with support from gFSC and over thirty partners.

As the scale of needs continues to grow, and following the adoption of resolutions 2139 and 2165 by the United Nations Security Council, humanitarian actors operating inside Syria from Damascus or across the borders from neighboring countries are organizing themselves around a “Whole of Syria” (WOS) approach in an effort to improve the effectiveness and operational reach of their collective responses. Since May 2014, WFP, FAO and NGO partners have worked to further

enhance Food Security Cluster/Sector coordination for Syria, by linking the various actors who are working in Syria but are spread out in South Turkey, Damascus, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon; with a regional coordination hub in Amman which covers the Whole of Syria related coordination issues including a comprehensive needs, response and gaps analysis. The gFSC team contributed to the response by deploying two team members to Jordan as a Cluster Coordinator and an Information Manager to set-up the Whole of Syria coordination structure. Additional assistance to enhance coordination was provided through support missions.

Ukraine (new cluster)

Food and Nutrition Security Cluster was established on 23 December in Ukraine in order to coordinate assistance to some 360,000 people and activities of fifteen partners. In 2015, the sector members will coordinate activities in order to meet the food needs through a mix of locally-purchased food and cash and voucher transfers. Partners will be engaged in participatory approaches to ensure that those most in need are targeted – primarily the most vulnerable population groups amongst IDPs, returnees in safe areas, host communities and the local population in conflict hotspots, mainly across the five regions in the eastern part of the country.



Photo: gFSC

How do partners view gFSC?

“The global Food Security Cluster has shown vision, leadership and commitment to ensure that food security responses are inclusive of the most vulnerable, including older people. Over the last year HelpAge has worked closely with the cluster and in a short period of time we have seen significant developments both in relation to the development of tools and guidance for inclusive programming, but also in the leadership provided in emergencies. From HelpAge’s perspective, the work of the cluster provides an excellent example of how the needs of marginalised groups can be brought to the centre of humanitarian programme design and implementation.”

**HelpAge
International**

age helps

“At Samaritan’s Purse, we recognize that the gFSC is an essential part of the international food assistance superstructure. Cooperation and coordination with likeminded partners at all levels ensures that food assistance is delivered in a way which is efficient, effective, and appropriate to beneficiary needs.

The role of gFSC within the global UN emergency reform process allows partner organizations not only to benefit from the results, but to have a voice in the process itself. The strong gFSC emphasis on national and local outreach helps our organization identify and meet needs in both emergency and development situations. Samaritans Purse finds that when our food program staff participate in gFSC activities, either as trainees or as seconded members of the gFSC team, they are able not only to receive and share in the specific context, but grow professionally by working alongside some of the best food assistance operatives in the world.

As one of the largest private global relief and development organizations, Samaritan’s Purse leaders know that that real solutions to food insecurity can only come through coordinated and cooperative mechanisms, which focus on appropriate contextual need, and we believe that participation in and support for gFSC is an important step towards that goal”.





3. Capacity development in support of national clusters

To ensure that there is a pool of trained and experienced cluster coordinators and information managers ready to be deployed to humanitarian emergencies, capacity development is one of the key functions of gFSC. By organizing trainings and managing a roster, gFSC has been able to increase its readiness for L3 and other emergencies.

3.1 Cluster Coordinator Trainings

By introducing a new training programme for Cluster Coordinators, gFSC was able to significantly increase the number of qualified candidates ready to be deployed to emergencies. The training programme targets both experienced humanitarians with the potential of becoming Cluster Coordinators and those who are already in coordinator positions. Through a simulation training, participants have an opportunity to better understand and practice their roles and responsibilities as a Cluster Coordinator before, during and after an L3 emergency.

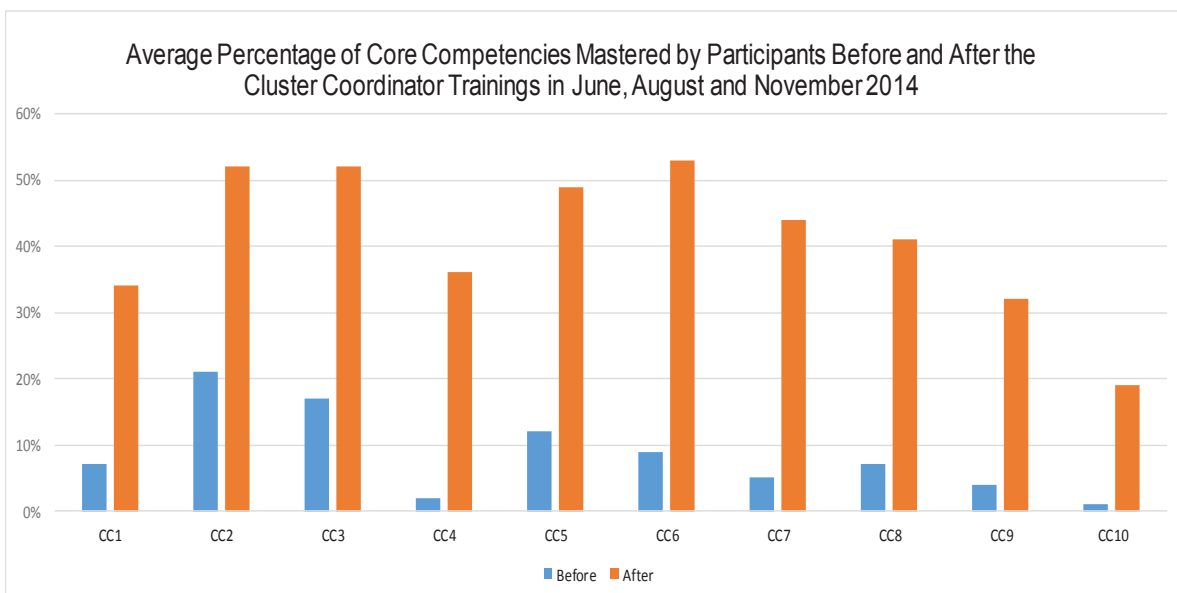
The three-week training process consists of: 1) pre-workshop tasks; 2) workshop with updates on the Transformative Agenda and

Humanitarian Programme Cycle; and 3) simulated scenario of an L3 emergency with reflection, learning and integration.

To identify qualified candidates that could join the gFSC Roster either at L3 or L2 level, gFSC also developed a tool to assess the candidates' performance.

Four trainings took place in 2014; three in Rome and one in Bangkok. Overall, a total of seventy-three participants were trained, seventeen of which were NGO partners. After trainings, five candidates have been deployed to country clusters. Prior to the trainings, twenty-one candidates had already been deployed to the field.

Readiness to respond to emergencies increased as 73 Cluster Coordinator candidates and 44 IM Officers were trained.



The Cluster Coordinator training was designed to enable participants to master ten core competencies which are in line with cluster emergency response protocols and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Based on the participants' self-assessments, the above diagram displays the core competencies most mastered by participants throughout the course of the three trainings held in 2014. The core competencies are: 1. Understanding key concepts, principles and standards; 2. Core competencies of a Food Security Cluster Coordinator; 3. Principled soft skills for Food Security Cluster Coordinators; 4. The Cluster Coordinator's role in preparedness; 5. Coordinating food security assessments and needs analysis; 6. Roles and responsibilities of the Food Security Cluster Coordinator in strategic response planning; 7. Roles and responsibilities of the Food Security Cluster Coordinator in resource mobilization; 8. Implementing food security response and monitoring; 9. Food security operation review; 10. Evaluating the work done by the Food Security Cluster.

3.2 Information Management Trainings

Finding skilled and experienced Information Managers for multiple simultaneous emergencies has been challenging. To increase the number of candidates with the right skill set, gFSC developed a training, which covers both core Information Management (IM) concepts and more specifically, the new FSC IM Tool. As a result, there is now a pool of candidates ready to be deployed to emergencies where they immediately can start using the new tool, reducing the time required to set up an information management system.

Two trainings for forty-four participants were organized in Rome, including both current FSC IM Officers and candidates with the potential and interest of being deployed as Information Managers.

At the trainings, participants learned to:

- manage and use the gFSC IM tool in their respective cluster;
- understand the tool's added value across the Information Management Cycle, and how it links with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle;
- produce standard reports and maps with the tool and learn how to conduct advanced analysis; and
- motivate and train FSC partners to use the IM tool.

3.3 gFSC Roster

Timely response is critical for effective humanitarian action while deploying the right person at the right time remains a great challenge. The gFSC Roster, formalized in



2014, contributes to ensuring that the right staff, with the right skill set, is sent to the right place at the right time. Through the roster, gFSC can facilitate the deployments of country-level FSC staff in a more timely and efficient manner through a defined and formalized process. The gFSC roster has the following objectives:

- allow gFSC to immediately deploy staff as surge capacity for a L3 response;
- allow gFSC to support Cluster Lead Agencies at country-level in their selection of cluster staff;
- allow gFSC to build on global partnerships to support country-level clusters.

The **Cluster Coordinators** included in the roster should have prior experience in humanitarian response at mid or senior level in the food security sector and training on cluster coordination. They are expected to be able to work and plan at both strategic and operational level and understand the international humanitarian response architecture, including coordination mechanisms, humanitarian action, reform and funding mechanisms. In terms of



Photos: gFSC



soft skills, Cluster Coordinators should be able to work with a diverse group of stakeholders and develop consensus and joint working. Regardless of difficult circumstances, they are expected to maintain high levels of morale and work productively in a difficult environment.

Information Managers are expected to have a basic understanding of the humanitarian architecture and to be able to proactively gather information from a variety of stakeholders. They should master presenting information in a strategic way to enable effective decision-making. Information Managers should be proficient in reporting, geographical information systems and database management as well as possess a strong technical skill set and knowledge of analytical tools, including the gFSC IM Tool.

The gFSC roster candidates go through a rigorous selection process before being included in the roster and will be subject to appraisal after deployments.

In order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, the gFSC roster is coordinated with FAO and WFP Emergency Rosters. In addition, gFSC works with partners to deploy candidates under partnership arrangements and facilitates deployments through FAO and WFP stand-by partner agreements (i.e., Norwegian Refugee Council, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, Danish Refugee Council, Canadem, etc.).

3.4. Accountability to affected populations and people-centric approaches

gFSC is strongly committed to the Transformative Agenda, the Principles of Partnership and the five pillars in the accountability to affected populations (AAP) Framework. In an effort to make food security programming more accountable to affected populations, the gFSC Programme Quality



Working Group designed a People-Centric Checklist, highlighting modalities for mainstreaming age, gender, disability and protection across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, including assessment methodologies, response implementation and monitoring.

Furthermore, gFSC works with Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) to identify the AAP capacity building and coordination needs of clusters. On the basis of the needs identified, gFSC and GNC will jointly develop guidance and standard operating procedures for conducting beneficiary feedback and complaints mechanisms, community consultations and information sharing sessions within a cluster context.

In 2014, the People-Centric Checklist was implemented in numerous emergency contexts. Lessons learned and good practices were collected to highlight existing cluster strengths and weakness and to inform corrective action. To mainstream programme quality in the skills of all cluster coordinators, the checklist has been used at the gFSC Cluster Coordinator trainings.

AAP & People-Centric Approaches in Iraq

Among the core objectives of the Iraq Strategic Response Plan is to ensure an effective, accountable and coordinated food security response founded on evidence-based interventions that advocate for and take into consideration the needs of each segment of affected communities by age, gender and diversity. To achieve this objective, coordinated food security and livelihood assessments and monitoring exercises are conducted, taking into account the differing needs of women, girls, boys and men. A coordinated, comprehensive context analysis accompanies all food security activities to ensure complementarity of different food sector actors in order to minimize duplication and increase the efficiency of assistance. The cluster is moreover engaged in inter-agency initiatives on AAP and Communication with Communities (CwC) that directly benefit the delivery of quality food security programming.

Example: AAP & People-Centric Approaches in the Philippines

Following the catastrophic consequences of the Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013 and the subsequent activation of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), important steps were taken towards the integration of people centric issues across the phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Five months on, in April 2014, FSAC compiled concrete evidence on how various agencies operationalized the commitments made in the Strategic Response Plan for the integration of people centric issues. Based on the feedback provided by seven partner agencies key achievements and challenges were recorded as part of the lessons learned exercise.

The Strategic Response Plan was developed after extensive consultations with various actors including experts on protection, gender, age, disability and AAP. The final narrative reflected four areas of commitments made by the cluster towards people centric issues:

1. Inclusive Assessments

- Five out of seven agencies reported that their assessments captured the needs across gender, age, disability, diversity and protection, including “do no harm”.
- Several felt that information on sex and disability also led to a more responsive distribution system.

2. Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD)

- Five out of seven agencies reported that they were able to collect SADD at various levels.
- Common challenges related to collecting SADD included access constraints, limited power supply and internet connection, safety and security conditions as well as lack of clear understanding of different disabilities.

3. People Centric Programming

- Five out of seven agencies reported to having addressed the specific needs of affected populations, especially during the delivery of assistance.
- Community consultations and beneficiary targeting aimed to address the most vulnerable groups.

4. Accountability to Affected Populations

- Several partners addressed humanitarian accountability, including appropriate feedback mechanisms, such as through tarpaulins, distribution of flyers and programme participant protection policies.
- Post distribution surveys were also conducted to understand whether there were any vulnerable households excluded from assistance programmes.



Photo: FAO/L.Liwanag



4. Information management and learning

In humanitarian emergencies, information provides basis for common understanding of the situation. Efficient information management helps to ensure that relevant actors are working with the same or complementary information that is as relevant, accurate and up-to-date as possible. As such, it supports coordination, strategic and operational decision-making, advocacy and resource mobilization – and accountability – during all phases of an emergency. The gFSC team supports country clusters' information management by providing guidance and tools.

FSC Information Management Tool

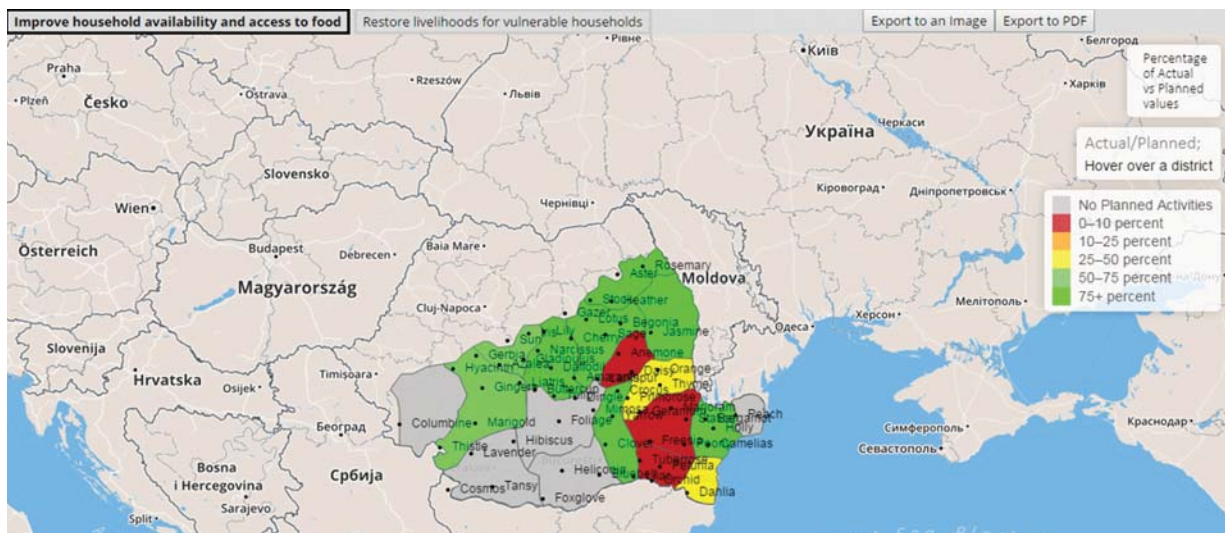
Information Management is one of the core Food Security Cluster functions. Recognizing the need for the country-level Food Security Clusters to take a holistic approach to data collection and sharing, the gFSC has developed a web-based IM tool for cluster systems and partners to use to collect, analyse and report on food security responses. The tool development was finalized in 2014 with associated trainings. It is an elaboration of a tool that was built and used by the Somalia and South Sudan Food Security Clusters, aiming to bring the successful country-level experiences to global scale.

While the IM tool will make data collection, processing and response analysis globally comparable, it is flexible enough to be able to be tailored to different country contexts. By producing standard reports and maps the tool can visualize gaps and overlaps of partner responses, and ultimately help in avoiding duplication of humanitarian assistance.

Consistent information sharing by partners will facilitate project tracking and monitoring, contributing to evidence based decision making for strategic intervention and improved implementation. Furthermore, the tool will enhance the dissemination of timely and accurate information for advocacy efforts.

As the Somalia FSC started using the new IM tool, gFSC team conducted a mission to assist in the process. As a result, the Somalia FSC was able to transition to the new tool, which provides them with more advanced mapping and reporting functions. In addition to Somalia, the roll-out process has been started in Iraq, Whole of Syria response and South Sudan with additional countries planning to start using the tool in 2015. The gFSC team provides on-demand support to IM tool users worldwide.

By producing standard reports and maps, IM tool visualizes gaps and overlaps in food security response and facilitates strategic resource allocation.



gFSC IM Tool automatically produces interactive maps

FSC website

The food security cluster website at foodsecuritycluster.net includes both global-level and country-cluster specific information, including meeting minutes, tools, guidance, documents and information on current activities. In 2014, the FSC website increased its usage significantly by almost doubling the visitor sessions in comparison with 2013. To further enhance the website, based on the feedback received from website users, the gFSC team started a website enhancement process in late 2014. It is anticipated that the enhancement process will be completed in 2015, funding permitting.

Newsletter

Based on a partner survey conducted in October 2013, gFSC renewed its newsletter in 2014. Number of recipients grew throughout the year – from 220 recipients in March to 460 recipients in December 2014.

Social media

gFSC introduced social media as a communications method in connection with the Philippines Typhoon Haiyan response. The gFSC Twitter account remained active throughout the year and increased the number of its followers steadily. gFSC also started using Yammer as an internal platform for country-level Cluster Coordinators and Information Managers to connect across the globe.

Country Cluster Performance Monitoring Tool

Monitoring coordination performance at country-level is necessary in order to assess whether the cluster is an efficient and effective coordination mechanism. The system consists of two parts: the cluster activation checklist, which is designed to monitor the activation and implementation of the cluster following the declaration of an emergency; and the coordination performance report, which assesses the quality of cluster coordination functions through feedback from the cluster coordinator and partners. The report allows clusters to see where they perform well and to identify the possible areas of improvement. In 2014, Cluster Performance Monitoring Reports were generated for six cluster countries (Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen) and the process was started in Iraq.

Lessons learned

gFSC collects lessons learned from the field to document key country-level coordination accomplishments, to identify shortcomings and best practices and to share experiences across country clusters and partners. In 2014, gFSC documented lessons learned in C.A.R. and the Philippines and the process was started in Colombia.

4.1 FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action in 2009-14

A formal evaluation of food security cluster coordination was requested by the Executive Board of WFP and FAO Governing Bodies to assess the way Food Security Clusters. The final report and associated management response were presented to the WFP Executive Board and FAO Programme Committee in November 2014.

The evaluation, conducted by independent evaluators, assessed the performance and results of the gFSC from 2009 to 2014, focusing on country-level coordination and its effects on humanitarian response. A component of the evaluation examined how the activities of the gFSC support coordination at country-level.



Photo: William Reina/WFP



As demonstrated by the evaluation:

- The food security coordination mechanisms assessed made consistent, positive contributions by facilitating networking and helping to build trust; reducing duplication of efforts; enhancing reporting; and, in some cases, setting and disseminating standards.
- By avoiding duplication and enabling humanitarian organizations to redirect resources, food security coordination had a positive effect on the coverage of services provided.
- Effective engagement of food security clusters in needs assessment and gap analysis reduced the duplication of assessments, provided credible data for funding applications, promoted a fuller understanding of food security, and helped direct partners to underserved areas.
- While a quantitative cost-benefit analysis of food security coordination is not possible, proxy indicators suggest that investments in food security coordination have been worthwhile overall.

The evaluation recommended a series of concrete actions to enhance cluster performance at global and country levels, including the following:

- strengthen the operational relevance of food security coordination;
- further strengthen coordination capacities;
- enhance efforts to engage national and local civil society organizations and non-traditional humanitarian actors in food security coordination;
- increase the support for national coordination mechanisms or strengthen engagement with government actors (depending on context);

- ensure a more consistent commitment and capacity of lead agencies to support food security coordination;
- address outstanding issues relating to the coordination architecture; and
- further strengthen the commitment of donors to food security coordination.

These recommendations informed the development of the new gFSC Strategic Plan 2015-16 and some are already under implementation.

4.2 Technical working groups

During the course of the year, gFSC supported four working groups, which contribute to the continual improvement of food security programming at country-level. By tapping into the country-level experiences, working groups produce global-level tools and guidance that can be then provided back to the field level. The working groups utilize the expertise of partner organizations, who also chair the groups, demonstrating the strength of partnership within gFSC.

“From field to global and back to field”

Food Security and Livelihoods in Urban Settings

The Food Security and Livelihoods in Urban Settings Working Group strengthens coordination and capacity of gFSC partners to shape food security responses in urban settings. Thanks to a committed membership, the working group was able to significantly broaden its activities in 2014. To capture and analyse the lessons learned from a humanitarian response in urban settings, a

comprehensive case study was conducted around the Typhoon Hayan response in the Philippines. Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Colombia, among others, have been proposed as possible case studies for 2015. To further promote learning, the working group collected urban food security case studies from gFSC partners. With the FSC IM Tool, mapping exercise was enhanced with the opportunity to extract urban data from the tool.

Importantly, in line with the working group's main objective of building specific urban tools and guidelines, a project called "Adapting to an Urban World" was initiated to develop food security vulnerability urban assessment tools by field testing them in different urban food security contexts. A comprehensive desk review was conducted and the first pilot case study took place in Zimbabwe. The working group continued its outreach to country clusters, leading to a stronger engagement of Cluster Coordinators. Finally, advocacy work in major urban fora continued and strong links were established, among others, with the IASC Urban Reference Group, the City-Region Food Systems Group, the ALNAP Urban Community of Practice and the FAO Food for Cities.

Programme Quality

The aim of the Programme Quality Working Group is to enhance the quality of food security responses in humanitarian emergencies. The working group has developed and shared tools and guidance for assessment, response analysis and monitoring of food security and livelihoods activities, to ensure that the services

provided have an ultimate goal of an increased positive impact for the most vulnerable within the affected populations. The working group promotes best practice and integration of people-centric themes of gender, protection, age, disability and environmental issues into partners' projects and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle for improving accountability to affected population. Around twenty-five partners are active in the group.

Cash and Markets

In 2014, the purpose of the Cash and Markets Working Group was to strengthen the coordination and mainstreaming of cash transfer and market based programming of gFSC partners in humanitarian responses. The working group comprised of approximately fifteen organizations and built strong relations with several other cash platforms, acting as a facilitator to promote an inter-sectorial and inter-cluster approach to cash. Among other activities, the working group put significant effort in identifying the best solutions for ensuring systematic capacity building for cash and market experts at global level by liaising with the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), UN agencies, NGOs and other clusters involved in capacity building and implementation of Cash Transfer Programming and Market Based Programming. The idea to develop an ad-hoc Cash and Markets Capacity Building Roster as a possible option to ensure deployment of cash and market experts as needed, was discussed extensively and is likely to be implemented in 2015.

Adapting to an Urban World:

The overall objective of the "Adapting to an Urban World" project is to strengthen food security analysis in support of humanitarian responses to food security crises in urban settings. The project aims to develop tools, training materials and guidance to identify levels and types of vulnerability to food insecurity in urban areas and inform appropriate responses. These tools will be designed and tested in six different urban contexts facing food insecurity, including areas affected by conflict, natural hazards, migration, rising food prices and poverty. The project is co-managed by gFSC and WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM). A Steering Committee has been established to advise and monitor the planning and implementation of the project and members include UNHCR, Oxfam, Samaritan's Purse, World Vision International, IFRC, World Animal Protection and ALNAP.

The first case study took place in Harare, Zimbabwe in November 2014. The location was identified based on capacity and interest of the gFSC and WFP partners at country level. The field work was coordinated by a global team of gFSC, WFP and IFRC representatives, with an effective participation at country-level from the Government and several partners including World Vision International, Oxfam, Red Cross Zimbabwe and Catholic Relief Services. Apart from the main objective of developing global tools for the humanitarian community, the Harare exercise and its findings have been useful not only to strengthen ongoing urban programmes of country partners but also to serve as a basis for a national urban assessment to be carried out by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2015.



5. Advocacy, communication and partnerships

Effective communication plays an important role in building partnerships, enhancing coordination systems and influencing policy and resource mobilization.

gFSC raises awareness on gFSC values and strengthens the links between gFSC and its partners, country clusters, other global clusters and the broader humanitarian community. Regular communications occur through teleconferences, website, newsletter, social media, e-mail and print products, including the annual report, brochures and factsheets.

Partners are at the heart of gFSC, which consists of around forty-eight organizations – partners, observers and associates. In 2014, the gFSC welcomed COOPI as a new gFSC partner. The increased partner ownership of the gFSC is evidenced by the attendance at the biannual global partners' meetings, where strategic, global level food security issues are discussed. There has been increasing participation from country-cluster representatives, bringing in national perspectives and experience.

gFSC advocates for food security coordination on behalf of its partners. This involves internal and external communications to influence policy and resource mobilization to enhance coordination systems and building partnerships. In 2014, gFSC participated in external meetings, Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) -level inter-cluster working groups and task teams to ensure that the needs of gFSC



and its partners are reflected in the IASC Transformative Agenda and the wider humanitarian architecture. For example, based on the experience gained at country-level, gFSC contributed to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2015 guidance revision process and advised country clusters on the revised cycle. Furthermore, gFSC provided feedback on revised L3 emergency protocols and guidance.

Enhancing gFSC capacity through secondments

The capacity of gFSC has been strengthened by seconding staff with specific technical expertise from partner organizations. In 2014, gFSC had a secondee from HelpAge International to advise on the gFSC's programme quality work and to provide coordination support in several countries, including strengthening county level awareness of vulnerability issues. In addition, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland has funded a Junior Professional Officer. Three secondees from Samaritan's Purse were deployed as Information Management Officers to the Philippines and South Sudan and nine candidates from stand-by partners and seven candidates from Cluster Lead Agencies were deployed to country clusters to ensure that there are no gaps in cluster staffing.

Several global partners have expressed their interest to further engage with the gFSC through secondments either with the gFSC team or through country-level surge missions. Although, due to funding constraints, these partnership arrangements might only be partially implemented, partners benefit from gFSC trainings and the gFSC roster, which has allowed gFSC to progressively expand its rapid response capacity with a wider pool of skilled experts, increasing its readiness for L3 and other emergencies.

How do partners view gFSC?

“Oxfam has seen very strong growth of the gFSC since its inception and impressive and rapid coordination capacity in major recent emergencies such as Typhoon Haiyan and the Ebola crisis. In addition, the gFSC has been very responsive to the needs highlighted by its partner agencies and has been responsive and inclusive in its strategy and workplan design, taking issues of programme quality and accountability seriously into account. Impressive recent leadership on projects such as 'Adapting to an Urban World' demonstrate the ability of the gFSC to also remain at the forefront of programmatic food security and livelihood innovation.”



“The gFSC enables the Zimbabwe Red Cross to learn from global experiences and ensure interventions and targeting are structured in such a way that the targeted communities receive effective assistance. Since interactions with gFSC commenced, Zimbabwe Red Cross has been able to learn what other organisations are doing to assist the urban population and to improve its urban programming by adding on activities in the areas of nutrition and environmental management through waste management. These activities have improved the livelihoods of communities as well as of the urban environment.”

“We have really benefitted from gaining insight into the work being spearheaded by many of the gFSC’s working groups and committed members. A wide range of tools now exist to support country clusters in improving humanitarian coordination and effectiveness. In addition, the gFSC’s rather lean global support team has done a tremendous job in supporting humanitarian operations and developing the capacity of country clusters and their members, which has been very inspiring to see! We’re looking forward to further supporting the critical work of the gFSC, and strengthening the linkages between our own humanitarian operations and that of other gFSC members at the country-level.”



6. Strategic direction 2015-16

Preparing to meet the humanitarian challenges of tomorrow, the next two-year period will be guided by a new Strategic Framework, which was developed in consultation with gFSC partners.

The new gFSC Strategic Plan 2015-16 was developed over 2014 in consultation with partners. As proposed at the global partners' meeting in May 2014, a "Drafting Committee" was established in July, including representatives from partner NGOs and country clusters. The committee had a face-to-face meeting in Rome in September to discuss the initial version of the work plan. All comments were consolidated into a work plan matrix, based on which the gFSC support team drafted the Strategic Plan narrative. The new strategy was presented to partners at the November meeting.

Overall, the gFSC strategic direction for 2015-16 is building on achievements since 2011 and is informed by the 2014 joint WFP/FAO evaluation of the Food Security Cluster system. The gFSC will continue to strengthen the capacity of country clusters to respond to the food security needs of individuals and communities in humanitarian crises.

In 2015-2016, the work of gFSC will be organized around six results, while remaining responsive to partners' needs:

1. Strengthened and developed national clusters' capacity

The purpose of cluster coordination is to ensure that international responses to humanitarian emergencies are clearly led and accountable, aiming to make the international humanitarian community a better partner for the affected people. This requires developing additional expertise through trainings and in-country capacity building.

2. Harmonised and globalised information management system

Building on the significant work that has already been accomplished, gFSC will focus on the roll-out, maintenance and enhancement of the existing tools and information systems, such as FSC website and Information Management Tool, as well as on training country-level information management officers.

3. Improved operational and surge support to national clusters

Timely response is critical for effective humanitarian action. gFSC works to be more predictable, consistent and timely in addressing coordination requirements at country-level, drawing on the gFSC support team, gFSC Roster and partners' capacities.

4. Scaled-up advocacy, communication and resource mobilisation

While the benefit of coordination is recognized, it is still necessary to advocate for food security coordination on behalf of partners and country clusters to a wider audience. Advocacy efforts will further highlight gFSC core values and principles of partnership.

5. Deepened and diversified global partnerships and operational collaborations

Partnerships and collaboration are at the very heart of the cluster approach and gFSC is looking at opportunities and modalities to strengthen country-level and global partnerships.

6. Systematised learning and knowledge management processes

gFSC aims to capture, analyse and document best practices of food security-related interventions that are being implemented at country-level with the objective of cross fertilising experiences and opening up new and innovative options to a number of countries.

The full Strategic Plan 2015-16 and the related workplan matrix are available at the FSC website.

7. Financial information 2014

The gFSC budget needs for 2014 were estimated at around US\$ 3.02 million. Out of this, the total funds received in 2014 (both in-kind¹ and financial contributions) amounted to US\$2,789,000 including costs for both staff (staff, secondments and consultants) and activities. Due to the funding gap of around US\$200,000, not all planned activities materialised in 2014. Funding permitting, they will be carried out in 2015.

The below table shows the funding received by the four result areas.

In 2014, gFSC received contributions² from FAO, WFP, HelpAge International and Samaritan's Purse, as well as the Governments of Finland, Sweden, Switzerland³ and the United Kingdom. gFSC thanks all of them for their contributions and support.

gFSC Strategic Plan 2013-14 result areas and amounts received (both in-kind and cash) in 2014, US\$

Result 1. Operational and Surge Support to National Clusters	803,000
Result 2. Capacity Development in Support of National Clusters	640,000
Result 3. Information Management and Learning	817,000
Result 4. Advocacy, Communications and Partnership	529,000
TOTAL	2,789,000

¹As estimated value of secondments and in-kind contributions

² Both financial and in-kind

³ The contribution from Switzerland was received in 2013 to cover the period of July 2013-June 2014.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



World Food Programme



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



UKaid
from the Department for
International Development

gFSC Partners, Observers and Associates





Food Security Cluster Support Team
WFP HQ, Via Cesare Giulio Viola, 68
00148 Roma, Italy

info@foodsecuritycluster.net
www.foodsecuritycluster.net
twitter.com/FSCluster