



## Optimizing humanitarian response through robust country-level inter-cluster / sector collaboration

The global increase in the number of active conflicts, internal population displacement, refugee crises, food and water scarcity, climate change, and rising communicable disease outbreaks, complicated by severely strained humanitarian resource capacity, are driving millions of people into devastating situations in many countries. The complex, interdependent nature of people's needs cannot be addressed by individual sectors, which are themselves gravely underfunded (2024 Global Humanitarian Overview has only been funded 15% as of April). A more holistic approach is therefore needed to meaningfully save lives, livelihoods and sustain essential service provision.

For the past three years, the global Food Security, Health, Nutrition and WASH clusters have been jointly working to strengthen their approach to inter-cluster/sector collaboration (ICSC), to address these complex humanitarian needs. Inter-cluster/sector collaboration brings relevant clusters/sectors together to collectively identify needs, plan and implement joint actions at the same time, at the same place and targeting the same most in-need people, to achieve greater and longer lasting impact from the very limited resources and humanitarian capacity.

To facilitate this approach, the global clusters have produced [guidance](#) to support national cluster/ sector coordination teams initiate, implement, and monitor ICSC including access to [e-learning modules](#) and case studies.

In several countries, the four clusters have actively incorporated the strategies, tools and guidance developed at the global level. Additionally, in a few countries, other clusters/sectors have joined the cause, such as Education, Protection/GBV. Afghanistan, DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan and Whole of Syria have initiated collaboration by identifying joint needs and priorities to develop minimum service packages, while clusters in [Ethiopia](#) and, [Yemen](#) are already providing target population groups with a package of multi sector/cluster services. Nevertheless, despite this global and country-level commitment and move toward greater convergence, many challenges remain to be overcome to ensure a systematic implementation of effective and efficient inter-cluster/sector collaboration.

Some of the issues facing country clusters / sectors were highlighted in a stock-taking webinar conducted in early April 2024 ([refer to Annex 5](#) of the “What is ICSC?” document), while more in-depth case studies on lessons learned are being conducted in selected countries, through Tufts University and a BHA-funded FHI 360 project, to get a better picture of the situation.

Amidst increasing demands and dwindling funding, enhanced inter-sector collaboration can significantly improve the efficiency and quality of humanitarian assistance to affected populations, paving the way for a more inclusive future response.



**Based on the learning from the past few years, the global Food Security, Health, Nutrition, and WASH clusters together call upon and urge all stakeholders to invest in and scale up joint action in humanitarian contexts, at country and area level. We call on:**

**Donors and resource partners:** To encourage joint proposals, addressing multi-sectoral needs and vulnerabilities, looking at them in a holistic manner - as a set of interventions needed to serve the most vulnerable/affected population - and not just focusing on the cost of the joint package; the funding should be medium to long term to be able to observe and document outcomes/impact.

**Country clusters/sectors:** To initiate ICSC by mapping existing joint collaboration and opportunities for greater convergence, mobilizing partners and other relevant stakeholders, dedicating resources to the set-up phase and pursuing the efforts for scaling-up successful initiatives.

**OCHA:** To support ICSC efforts by facilitating the use of its instruments (e.g. HRP, CBPF and CERF templates to allow developing, monitoring and reporting on ICSC progress), and platforms (e.g., areas-based coordination) to support joint timely implementation.

**Actors on the ground:** To support ICSC efforts by investing in multi-sectoral projects, and/or building consortia (ideally including local actors), monitor their outputs / outcomes, report these to the clusters, and share lessons learnt with the wider humanitarian community.

**Cluster Lead Agencies and governments:** To develop agreements at country level to facilitate data sharing between agencies/sectors, to allow programs to target the same people, refer between sectors, and jointly monitor project outcomes.

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