

**Terms of Reference**

**IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase**

23 February 2009

**The present ToR have been established based on the “Phase Two Evaluation Framework” by Jessica Alexander, February 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 approved by the Cluster Evaluation 2 Steering Group (CE2StG). This document referred to as “Framework” in the text below is an integral part of the present ToR (attached).**

**1. Background/Context**

In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals requested an evaluation of the cluster approach after two years. The evaluation was divided into two phases, the first focusing on process indicators – the achievements and limitations of the cluster approach and lessons learned related to its roll-out. This phase was finalized in 2007 and has been widely circulated throughout the humanitarian community<sup>1</sup>. While improved systems typically lead to better humanitarian outcomes, the second phase aims to explicitly evaluate the cluster approach on the results it has had on improving the humanitarian response.

A Cluster Evaluation 2 Steering Group (CE2StG) comprised of stakeholders from the UN, donors, and NGOs has supervised the development of a methodological ‘Framework’ in close consultation with Global Clusters. The Framework states key indicators and benchmarks that are most relevant to each cluster and it will guide the entire evaluation process. The Framework should be used as an authoritative but flexible document to steer the evaluation as many stakeholders were consulted for its development and finalization.

**2. Overall Objective & Purpose of the evaluation**

The CE2StG agreed that the overall purpose and objectives of the evaluation are to<sup>2</sup>:

- Assess the main outcomes<sup>3</sup> of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular reference to the role of the cluster approach and other components of the humanitarian reform process
- Assess the overall operational effectiveness<sup>4</sup> of the cluster approach (including the role of the Global Clusters) in facilitating and supporting the coordinated joint humanitarian response at country level through an analysis of common country-level findings

<sup>1</sup> See *Cluster Approach Evaluation Final Draft*. November, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See *Revised Note on a Proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II*, 28 August 2008, Cluster 2 Evaluation Steering Group, Appendix D of the Phase Two Cluster Evaluation Framework

<sup>3</sup> Outcome understood as likely or achieved short term and medium term effects of the response’s outputs

<sup>4</sup> Effectiveness being the extent to which operational objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance

The CE2StG recognizes that “it will not be feasible to conduct a comprehensive assessment of impact (understood as variation of beneficiaries' conditions as a direct consequence of the cluster approach / humanitarian reform). In the context of 'operational effectiveness' the evaluation will nonetheless aim to identify whether and if so, how, the joint humanitarian response delivered through the cluster approach is contributing positively to the dignity and well-being of beneficiary populations and responding to their needs.”<sup>5</sup>

It is expected that the evaluation will not only attempt to enhance country level operations by providing them with actionable recommendations, but that it will also inform the wider humanitarian community (including the IASC, donors, global cluster teams) by bringing the reality in the field back to decision makers.

Finally, the objective of the evaluation is also to serve as a baseline for future evaluation exercises which examine effects and/or impacts of the cluster approach, using a common set of core indicators as set forth in the attached Framework for the cluster approach.

### **3. Scope**

Cluster Evaluation Phase I succeeded in assessing the quality of inputs being made and processes put into place by the Clusters to improve the Emergency Response Preparedness of the humanitarian system. It has done this through an intensive review of opinions as expressed by key stakeholders at the global and also at the national level. Cluster Evaluation Phase II should not repeat this, but will seek evidence about whether the critical outputs have been achieved. The evaluation will also consider any initial effects at the country level which could be linked to the application of the cluster approach.

Hence, Cluster Evaluation Phase II will gather evidence from six of the countries in which the cluster approach has been rolled out and applied, about operational effectiveness as defined in the approach note<sup>6</sup> and more specifically about critical inputs achieved, processes put into place and outcomes as well as their effects as per the logic model presented in the Framework narrative and scheme (Framework Section III).

Based on the findings of these six country reports, a synthesis will also distill major lessons about the application of the cluster approach within the wider humanitarian reform context.

Section IV of the Framework presents the Evaluation design and the List of key indicators to be built (see also next paragraph). As mentioned in that section, there will be obvious limitations in terms of attribution especially given the lack of baseline data and any clear reference points for comparison. Moreover, the short-time frames typically associated with cluster operations at the country level further complicates the analysis of results necessitating to some degree a type of real-time approach.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Revised Note on a Proposed Approach for the Cluster Evaluation Phase II*, 28 August 2008, Phase II Cluster Evaluation Steering Group, Appendix D of the Phase Two Cluster Evaluation Framework

<sup>6</sup> same as above

Despite these limitations, the Cluster Evaluation Phase II will need to maintain a strong focus on assessing country-level results as specified in the Framework. All perceptual data will need to be adequately triangulated with other objective sources of information to the extent possible to reduce bias (e.g. survey data and direct observations). All data, where possible, should be disaggregated by gender and age.

#### **4. Criteria and key questions**

The **evaluation criteria** are **summarized in the Evaluation Framework** (Section IV Box 1) and key indicators described in the corresponding tables in this same section:

“Gap Filling” and “Coverage” are certainly the main desired outcomes of the Cluster Evaluation, together with raising “Ownership” and improve sustainability through better “Connectedness”. In the logic model proposed by the Framework, this is achieved through the combined effect of improved “Leadership”, “Partnerships” and enhanced “Accountability”, including to beneficiaries, e.g. by ensuring that standards have been agreed upon and met.

While the approach to the evaluation should be to gather as much quantitative information in order to build the indicators as listed in the Framework (see also next section on methodology and framework section 5.1), additional information should be obtained from key stakeholders addressing general questions on the degree to which the above mentioned criteria have been met, e.g. (not exhaustive):

- What factors are contributing to/ or hindering humanitarian actors to deliver more effective and efficient assistance through the cluster approach?
- What have been the unintentional positive or negative results from the cluster approach?
- Efficiency: Have the outcomes justified the investment thus far?
- How is the cluster approach interacting with the other pillars of the humanitarian reform, in particular partnership and strengthened leadership?
- How can the cluster approach be strengthened? What further inputs are required?
- Has the cluster approach proven to be a sufficiently flexible instrument to respond to the needs of a range of contexts?
- Are there any intermediate effects or impacts that can be already be demonstrated?

These generic questions are intended to facilitate the synthesis of all country reports as described in the framework section 4.3. Further specific questions for the country clusters around effectiveness and outcomes should be defined during the initial phases of the country evaluations based on the cluster specific indicators as listed in section 4.2 of the Framework.

#### **5. Methodology**

The Cluster Evaluation Phase II will organize its approach to the above questions as elaborated and outlined in the Framework section V (and will use other existing, outcome-oriented performance frameworks and standards in the humanitarian sector used by the clusters).

The evaluation will be carried out through analyses of various data coming from different sources of information and by using various approaches including desk reviews; field visits; interviews with key stakeholders and primary clients (such as, UN and partner agencies, the donor, programme managers, etc.); and through cross-validation of data.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied to build and to further develop as necessary the established indicators as specified in the Framework section IV. This data gathering and analysis will be complemented by document reviews and key informant interviews to confirm findings and identified trends.

Desk Review

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will carry out desk reviews of relevant literature on the cluster approach and humanitarian reform more broadly.

Field Visits

Data collection and analysis at field level will be used to assess the operational effectiveness of the clusters based on quantitative data whenever available. Where this is not possible, interviews will be held with key stakeholders and additional information gathered.

At a minimum, it is expected from the field level evaluations that they should help to collect baseline information for future evaluations examining effects and/or impacts of the cluster approach.

Consultant Company / Research Institute team members will visit the following countries selected by the CE2StG in which the cluster approach has been introduced over the past years:

Country Choice

New Emergency:	<b>Gaza</b>
Sudden Onset:	<b>Haiti</b>
“New” rollout complex emergency:	<b>Chad</b>
	<b>Myanmar</b>
“Old” rollout complex emergency:	<b>Uganda</b>
	<b>DRC</b>

The Consultant Company / Research Institute is expected to bid for all of the countries mentioned. The buyer reserves the right to attribute groups of countries to different companies according to their documented regional competencies and capacities.

Key informant interviews

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will conduct key informant interviews in each country as needed. Interviewees will be selected based on their knowledge and experience in the

cluster approach, and will include: representatives of all UN agencies, funds and programs who are full or standing members of the IASC, with an emphasis on the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs); recipient state representatives; representatives of UN peace support operations where relevant; donor governments; representatives from IOs and NGOs; and local NGOs.

The evaluators should prioritize gathering beneficiary views. Their involvement in the data collection is essential to drawing conclusions about outcomes which bear effects on their lives. In this analysis ethical considerations must be followed and special attention given to ensuring that all relevant groups (men and women, children and elders, all ethnic groups) are heard.

The Consultant Company / Research Institute should apply the norms and standards for evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (the two documents are available from the website of the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Section: <http://ochaonline.un.org/esu>).

## **6. Management arrangements**

### *Responsibilities of the Consultant Company / Research Institute*

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will: 1) report to the assigned Task Manager within OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Section and provide four review workshops to the CE2StG on draft reports; 2) bear the responsibility to organize all travel, administrative and logistical arrangements; 3) announce travel within the "field visit" countries well in advance and in a timely manner to OCHA country offices; 4) bear the costs for all travel, administrative and logistical arrangements to OCHA NY/Geneva and to the field visits; 5) undertake the evaluation described above and in the Framework, under its own administrative responsibility; 6) retain editorial responsibility over the final report.

### *Responsibilities of OCHA ESS & HQ CE2StG*

Substantive Support:

OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) will assign an evaluation manager to oversee the conduct of the evaluation. He/she will be the main point of contact for the evaluation team. In conjunction with the CE2StG consisting of key stakeholders from the IASC and donor representation, OCHA ESS will: 1) provide guidance and input to the overall process, including feedback on the general approach for the evaluation 2) facilitate the team's access to specific information or expertise needed to perform the assessment; 3) monitor and assess the quality of the evaluation and its processes; 4) ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed; 5) comment on the inception report and draft report and provide assistance on templates and technical standards for evaluation; 6) convene and coordinate the CE2StG, and will be responsible for compiling comments on the reports and disseminating the final report; and 7) help organize and design the final learning workshop; and 8) ensure a management response to the final report and subsequent follow up.

Preparation Mission:

OCHA ESS, in close collaboration with OCHA Country Offices, may carry out as appropriate and subject to funds availability preparatory missions to the selected countries in which the evaluation will be carried out. OCHA ESS will inform the country teams on the upcoming evaluation and assist in the preparation and collection of relevant data sources. During these missions, OCHA ESS will gather contact information of key stakeholders to be interviewed.

The OCHA ESS task manager will assist the Consultant Company / Research Institute by providing lists and contact information of the relevant agency personnel in HQs and Country Offices not included in the field visits. The Consultant Company / Research Institute will augment this list with additional contacts from the humanitarian practitioner and academic communities.

The objective will be to make the most productive use of the researchers' time in country, so that they can maximize time for data collection and analysis and engage with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.

Responsibilities of the Country-Teams

OCHA at the country level will: 1) assist OCHA ESS in providing relevant data sources and lists of key stakeholders to be interviewed; 2) help arrange meetings with key informant interviewees (UN and non-UN) during the country visits; 3) facilitate travel arrangements and logistical arrangements of the Consultant Company / Research Institute within the country; 4) allow the Consultant Company / Research Institute access to all relevant data and information, in order to carry out the evaluation.

**7. Duration of the Evaluation and the tentative workplan:**

<p>Month One: <b>May</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review of existing documents and materials including: strategy documents, plans, proposals, monitoring data, mission reports, sitreps, previous evaluations/assessments agency/government/donor evaluations related to the actual performance of the emergency response.</li> <li>- Development of Inception Report, including a standard report structure for the country reports to facilitate the comparability and analysis</li> <li>- Consultation with global clusters (leads and member agencies) to determine:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Persons to meet at country level (OCHA ESS will carry out a preparatory mission)</li> <li>o Further insights into each cluster's operation</li> <li>o Refinement of indicators for each cluster</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Finalize logistics for field visits</li> </ul>
<p>Months Two – Five (minimum of 2 weeks per country): <b>June-October</b></p>	<p>Visits to six selected countries to include consultation at field level (not just at capital). Field visits will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial introduction meeting with key stakeholders: cluster</li> </ul>

	<p>leads, HC/RC, HCT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings with all clusters (leads and member agencies) present at country level and mapping any country specific outcome/effects indicators, reviewing country specific performance frameworks</li> <li>- Interviews with key personnel, partners, government officials, local NGOs, donors</li> <li>- Focus groups/interviews with beneficiaries to elicit feedback from local people on humanitarian operations</li> <li>- Visits to selected project/program sites areas</li> <li>- End visit debriefing to share broad findings with clusters and other stakeholders</li> </ul>
Months Six: <b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write-up of individual country reports</li> <li>- Submission of first draft to steering committee and clusters who were consulted</li> <li>- A review workshop held in NYC or Geneva to review substantive issues emerging from the initial draft</li> <li>- Incorporation of comments and production of second draft</li> <li>- Sign off by steering committee and submission of six country reports to IASC</li> </ul>
Months Seven – Eight: <b>December-January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write-up of synthesis report drawing from major findings/lessons from country reports</li> <li>- Submission of first draft to Steering Committee and Clusters</li> <li>- A review workshop held in NYC or Geneva to review substantive issues emerging from the initial draft</li> <li>- Incorporation of comments and production of second draft</li> </ul> <p>Sign off by Steering Committee and submission of six country reports to IASC</p>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8 Months</b>

Mandatory milestones for deliverables are described in section 9 of these ToR:

### **8. Competency and expertise requirements**

This evaluation will require the services of a Consultant Company / Research Institute with the following experience and skills:

- Extensive evaluation experience of humanitarian strategies and programmes and in the area of key humanitarian issues, especially response capacity.
- In-depth knowledge of humanitarian reforms and coordination processes and issues.
- Institutional knowledge of the UN and NGO actors
- In-depth knowledge of inter-agency mechanisms at HQ and in the field, particularly in the IASC context
- Regional and relevant country-level expertise (Sub Saharian Africa, South East Asia, Latin America) and work experience with national and regional organizations.

- Excellent writing and communication skills in English is a must, knowledge of French and Spanish is recommended
- Proven expertise in facilitating different types of consultative, evaluative workshops for comparable organizations, including more complex exercises/workshops involving a range of organizations and participants from field and headquarters
- Proven leadership in most of the above mentioned fields of work and a proven record in leading evaluation teams

The selected team should reflect, to the extent possible, regional and gender diversity and equality.

### **9. Technical Proposal Evaluation Criteria for the Selection of a Consultant Company / Research Institute**

The evaluation criteria for the selection of a Consultant Company / Research Institute will be based on the quality and adequacy of: 1) the proposed Work Plan, the Methodology and the Approach, 2) the Expertise of the Firm / Organization and on 3) the Personnel that the consultant team will put at the disposal of the evaluation. The Consultant Company / Research Institute should take into account these selection criteria in its proposal.

(For guidance on the bidding process (i.e. commercial aspects of the proposal), please refer to the document entitled 'Request for Proposals for Services', which is attached to the TOR).

<b>1. Proposed Work Plan, Methodology and Approach</b>
<p><u>Overall Quality:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the proposal well presented, clear and concise?</li> <li>• To what degree does the Proposer understand the task?</li> </ul> <p><u>Method:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the method and analytical approach logical, realistic and well defined in the presentation and reflect the correct understanding of the TOR / Evaluation Framework?</li> </ul> <p><u>Planning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the planning and sequence of activities logical, realistic and promise efficient implementation to the project in line with the TOR / Evaluation Framework?</li> </ul> <p><u>Scope:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the scope of work well defined and does it correspond to the TOR / Evaluation Framework?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Expertise of Firm / Organisation Submitting Proposal</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Organisational Capability which is likely to affect implementation (i.e. loose consortium, holding company or one firm, size of the firm / organisation, strength of project management support e.g. project financing capacity and project management controls)</li> <li>• Extent to which any work would be subcontracted (subcontracting carries additional risks which may</li> </ul>

affect project implementation, but properly done it offers a chance to access specialised skills).

Relevance of:

- Specialised Knowledge of humanitarian reforms and coordination processes and issues
- Specialised Knowledge of interagency mechanisms at HQ and in the field, particularly IASC context
- Extensive evaluation experience of humanitarian strategies and programmes in the area of key humanitarian issues, especially response capacity
- Regional and relevant country-level expertise (Sub Saharian Africa, South East Asia, Latin America) and work experience with national and regional organizations
- Experience on Similar Projects

**3. Personnel & Competencies**

Team Leader:

- General Qualification
- Suitability for the Project:
- International Experience
- High-Level Facilitation Experience
- Profound Professional Experience in the area of the required specialisation
- In-Depth Knowledge of the regions
- Language Qualifications

Other Team Members:

- General Qualification
- Suitability for the Project:
- International Experience
- Facilitation Experience
- Professional Experience in the area of the required specialisation
- Knowledge of the regions
- Language Qualifications

**10. Reporting Requirements**

Quality Requirements

The quality of the evaluation report will be judged according to the UNEG Evaluation Standards and the ALNAP Quality Proforma ([www.alnap.org/pdfs/QualityProforma05.pdf](http://www.alnap.org/pdfs/QualityProforma05.pdf)).

All reports listed below will be written in good Standard English. If in the estimation of the OCHA-ESS Chief, the reports do not meet this required standard, then the consultants will ensure at their own expense the editing needed to bring it to the required standard.

The milestones indicated for the delivery of the reports and workshops are mandatory. Payments due by these milestones will be made contingent upon delivery of satisfactory products which the quality standards as described above. Due dates are indicated below:

### Inception Report

An inception report outlining the proposed method, key issues and potential key informants for the evaluation, will be required. A format for the inception report will be provided by the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Section. The inception report should already elaborate a standard report structure for the country reports (see below) to facilitate the comparability and analysis for the final synthesis report (see below). The draft inception report will be reviewed and finally approved by the CE2StG.

**Deadline draft: May 29<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**Deadline final: June 15<sup>th</sup> 2009**

### Six Stand-Alone Country Reports

Six stand-alone evaluation country reports, including recommendations will be produced according to the methodology developed and stated in the Framework.

**Deadline first findings extracts for IASC WG: October 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> draft for CE2StG: November 16<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**Deadline final report: November 30<sup>th</sup> 2009**

### One Synthesis Report

The synthesis report will be written with a view towards assessing the overarching aims of the cluster approach. The purpose is to distill major lessons learned about the application of the cluster approach in the context of the wider humanitarian reform. Any indication of short or long term effects that can be seen should be highlighted in this tier.

This synthesis report will help to clarify underlying factors affecting the situation application, highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative), recommend actions to improve performance in both current and the roll-out of future operations, and generate lessons learned. The evaluators should attempt to uncover good practices that can demonstrate how and why certain applications of the cluster approach work in different situations. For more information on which key questions should be answered in the synthesis report, please see the Framework.

The six stand-alone reports of country level findings and recommendations and the synthesis report shall contain the elements specified in the document on standards for evaluation (pp.17-23) developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (available at: <http://ochaonline.un.org/esu>). All reports shall contain a short executive summary of up to 2,000 words and a main text of no more than 15,000 words, both including clear recommendations. Annexes should include a list of all persons interviewed, a bibliography, a description of the method used, as well as all other relevant material.

**Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> draft for CE2StG: November 30<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**Deadline final report: December 14<sup>th</sup> 2009**

### Debriefings and Workshops

The Consultant Company / Research Institute will: 1) inform the IASC Working Group about the first findings of the six country evaluation reports in mid November 2009; 2) debrief IASC and Donors / Member States, OCHA and UN agencies at the HQ (New York/ Geneva) about the findings of the synthesis report; 3) debrief UN country teams on the country level findings before the consultant team leaves the country.

**Deadline IASC WG: 11-13<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

**Deadline IASC member States debriefs: January 2010**

The country reports shall be finalized by mid-November, in order to feed into the discussion of the IASC Working Group. The synthesis report is due by mid-January.

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#### **11. Use of Evaluation Results**

- Inform Country Teams and more specifically Country Cluster leads on main achievements as well as critical improvements needed for the coordination mechanisms and their interactions with the humanitarian financing and strengthening mechanisms put into place
- Inform Donors at appropriate fora as of completion of field missions, to help them making informed about their level of support to coordination in general and the clusters more specifically
- Inform Global Cluster leads on main achievements as well as critical improvements needed for the global support to coordination mechanisms in the context of the humanitarian reform.

#### **12. Payment Details**

The following payment modalities are proposed:

<b>Installments upon reception of satisfactory finalized and approved products</b>	<b>Percentage of total amount</b>
Inception Report	30%
Six Stand Alone Country Reports	30%
One Synthesis Report	20 %
Debriefings and Workshops	20 %