

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination

Lesson: Support robust advocacy

Text-only version

In partnership with:



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Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- provide a correct definition of advocacy;
- identify the most important characteristics of effective advocacy and communication strategies; and
- list the Food Security Cluster Coordinator's tasks and responsibilities to implement effective advocacy strategies and activities.

Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals have agreed on a list of six core functions for Clusters. These six functions are aimed at "refocusing Clusters on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results".

(Recommendation 27, IASC, Transformative Agenda)

This lesson focuses on the first of the six core functions for Clusters at country level: **support robust advocacy**.



The six core functions

Support service delivery by:

- ✓ providing a platform that ensures service delivery and is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities;
- ✓ developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of activities.

Inform the HC/HCT's strategic decision-making by:

- ✓ preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities;
- ✓ identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues, including gender, age, disability/diversity, protection, HIV/AIDS and environment;
- ✓ formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.

Plan and implement cluster strategies by:

- ✓ developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives;

- ✓ applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines;
- ✓ clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.

Monitor and evaluate performance by:

- ✓ monitoring and reporting on activities and needs;
- ✓ measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results;
- ✓ recommending corrective action where necessary.

Support robust advocacy by:

- ✓ identifying concerns, and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action;
- ✓ undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.

Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning:

Preparedness is a continuous process. Broadly defined, it includes any action, measure or capacity development that is introduced before an emergency to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of a response and recovery.

For more information see: the **IASC reference module for Cluster Coordination at country level** <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters> in section 4 and the **Transformative Agenda Protocol: Common framework for preparedness**

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/common_framework_for_preparedness.pdf

FAO's vision

Let's begin this lesson on advocacy by recalling our Lead Agencies' visions of the world.

FAO's vision - A world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

WFP's vision - In emergencies, we get food to where it is needed, saving the lives of victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters. After the cause of an emergency has passed, we use food to help communities rebuild their shattered lives.

Humanitarian actors who work worldwide to provide life-saving assistance and protection to populations in need are motivated by these visions. To achieve them, strong advocacy is needed.

Advocacy can help to focus greater attention on specific Food Security (FS) needs of affected populations, and on humanitarian principles in general.

Through advocacy, all stakeholders - including the highest level of government, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and potential donors - are made aware of the situation, as well as the risks, unmet needs and opportunities in relation to food security. It is not always easy to advocate for appropriate attention on food security needs. However, we must pursue this objective vigorously.

Advocacy is one of the six core functions of each Cluster. It is **not the same as communication**. The goal of communication is to convey your message or information in an effective manner, while the goal of advocacy is to **create specific action or change**.

Advocacy requires a clear objective, a sound strategy and a specific set of activities that will convince decision-makers. This lesson will cover how to implement an effective advocacy strategy, and the roles of FSC partners in advocacy activities.

Advocating for food security needs

"Advocacy is making a **persuasive** argument for a specific outcome"

UNICEF

Advocacy should be conducted through both:

- ➡ **Public statements:** e.g. Collective Cluster statements
- ➡ **Private dialogue:** e.g. Cluster Coordinator discussions with government representatives

Each **advocacy message/argument** should **serve a specific purpose, be based on clear evidence, be adapted to the context.**



Arguments based on "rights" can be effective in creating political will where it is lacking, especially when framed within existing cultural constructs.

Example

This is a tweet from Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos. This message does not seek to promote OCHA's role in Chad and, due to Twitter's word limit, it is not aimed at providing detailed information, but at involving and informing the target audience of the difficult situation in Chad, so as to promote change. It is clear, immediate and well adapted to reaching a wide target audience, and can therefore be considered a good example of an advocacy message.



The partners' role in advocacy consists of contributing to overall FSC efforts to advocate for appropriate attention on specific food security needs of affected populations. All partners may play a significant role - government and institutional actors as well as local communities. In this sense, the strategy carried out during the 2005 Mali crisis is an interesting experience. The partners' role in advocacy includes the following activities:

- to advocate for donors to fund priority activities of all FSC partners;
- to present own activities in the context of the overall sector effort, whenever possible and appropriate;
- to emphasize the importance of – and own commitment to – coordination and collaboration.

Advocacy for food security in Mali

The Mali scenario

First, let's try to understand the economic and social context in which the Mali crisis occurred.

⇒ Facts on the country

Sprawled between the vast expanses of the Sahara and the Sahelian plains, Mali is one of the **world's poorest countries**. In UNDP's Human Development Index 2009, the country was ranked 178 out of 182 - fifth from bottom among countries of low human development.

Only **half the population** has access to clean drinking water.

Its infant mortality rate is **120 per 1 000** births.

The maternal mortality rate is **580 per 100 000** births.

⇒ The context

In northern Mali, the Goundam Circle in the region of Timbuctu is one of the country's poorest areas.

Water shortages and desertification have ruined farming and put an end to many livelihoods

dependent on raising animals. A conflict has worsened the situation even further. Things came to a

head in 2005, when a combination of seasonal and structural factors, aggravated by a locust invasion

and a pronounced lack of rainfall, triggered an unprecedented crisis throughout the country.

⇒ The partners

As part of its efforts to combat food insecurity, the Government assigned the Mali Red Cross four

especially vulnerable communes on the shores of the now almost dry Lake Faguibine. For four

months, backed by the Swiss Red Cross, the Mali Red Cross provided food assistance to 43 000

people.

However, the Mali Red Cross decided that this was not enough.

That was the situation in the country when the Mali Red Cross decided to implement a new strategy which involved both the Red Cross itself and local communities.

The Red Cross

The Mali Red Cross brought stakeholders together in a strategic planning workshop and persuaded representatives from the communities to attend, along with the authorities' technical services. The aim was to bring about a lasting improvement in the living conditions of the four communes. Through a

participatory approach based on a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA), the workshop identified the people's top needs.

The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment identified the following needs in the region:

1. improving community health by building awareness;
2. improving access to water – a crucial problem for desert dwellers;
3. replenishing food stocks and making them more accessible through market gardening and the setting up of cereal banks – village cooperatives that buy, store and sell basic food grains.

The priorities were developed into project activities that targeted the 40 most vulnerable villages.

Local communities

The role of the communities was equally important. The communities themselves identified and recruited village volunteers to raise awareness of health and hygiene issues, including HIV and AIDS. Trained by the Red Cross and the state technical services, they learned how to inform and educate, make people aware of best practices, and bring about behaviour change. The Mali Red Cross developed awareness-building tools specially designed for it.

The projects improved water sources by rehabilitating existing wells and sinking new ones, providing supplies for human consumption, animals and small-scale agriculture. By improving the availability, accessibility and consumption of their own produce, the inhabitants of Goundam have substantially **strengthened their food security**. Today, the Mali Red Cross is advocating for the projects to be duplicated elsewhere.

To replenish food supplies, the Red Cross focused on establishing women's market gardening groups and cereal banks.

The main advocacy actions carried out by the Red Cross were asking for duplication of the project, bringing stakeholders together in a strategic planning workshop and training local communities in how to inform and educate on health and hygiene issues.

Effective advocacy

From the previous example, we can also see that in order to develop a persuasive argument for a food security related need, you will have to reflect on:



The issue e.g. availability of food



The stakeholders

The key recipients include:

- ✓ Donors, regional bodies, communities affected by emergencies, national governments.
- ✓ Local and international media, parties to conflict, companies, the general public.

The first and most important audience is made up of **decision-makers**.

Advocates must influence these to achieve policy change.

The next targets are those who **influence the decision-makers most**, followed by other audiences who typically **influence decision-makers less**, such as the media, opinion leaders and the general public



The objective Whether it is funding, access, protection, attention, giving voice, rights.



The strategy

Which strategy should be selected?

An effective **public advocacy strategy** includes use of the most visible methods and channels. Media interviews with the Emergency Relief Coordinator (the United Nations humanitarian chief), public speeches, press briefings, web stories and social media campaigns.

An effective **private advocacy strategy** includes quiet diplomacy with governments, or negotiations with armed groups. It is also a crucial element in bringing about change, securing access or building support.

Food Security Coordinator and advocacy for food security

What is the role of the FSC Coordinator when implementing an advocacy strategy?

FSC Coordinators, together with the Cluster Leading Agencies (CLA), regularly **meet with donors** (individually and collectively) to explain the situation.

They actively **participate in the planning and execution** of multi-sector advocacy and communications strategies and also **highlight food security needs** in all relevant inter-sectoral processes (including HCT meetings, donor meetings, etc.).

Within the advocacy strategy established by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the FSC Coordinator should:

- ✓ Prepare **information briefs** to support resource mobilization, highlighting the priority gaps in the FS response and the human dimensions of the problem.
- ✓ Prepare concise, "donor friendly" **briefing materials and presentations**, including easy-to-understand graphics.
- ✓ **Provide detailed technical material and presentations** when requested by a particular donor.

The FSC Coordinators messages should be:

People-centred - Advocacy messages should be people-centred. They should include relevant, strategic arguments on why embedding cross-cutting issues (such as gender) can improve effectiveness of outcome and efficiency of FS assistance delivery.

Easy to understand - Advocacy materials should be easy to understand for people who are not food security specialists, and should also take account of the local cultural context. Explain concepts clearly and be careful and consistent in the use of terms. Try to avoid using acronyms and technical jargon.

Evidence-based - Make sure that your messages are evidence-based and that the evidence you're relying on is easy to check.

Example: Famine in South Sudan

This article <https://www.rt.com/news/south-sudan-starvation-un-664/> is an example of an advocacy message launched through an online medium. The article was published on 20 April 2014 on the **RT Question More** <https://www.rt.com/>

It was published by UN agencies to increase attention to a possible famine in South Sudan by mid-2014.

In the first part of the article, the perspective of famine facing the country is described. Then it raises the alarm of a catastrophic decline in food security if the planting season is not respected. Plenty of information on the South Sudan crisis is provided in this article. The detailed description of the South Sudan situation captures the attention of the readers.

The article is urging funding for the situation in South Sudan. It communicates the appropriate messages, at the right time, and using the right channel. It is a good example of an effective advocacy message.

Effective communication strategy

Effective communication in humanitarian response must be achieved for various audiences. To cover a wide range of recipients, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has developed and uses all types of products, platforms and channels. These include:

- standard tools such as press releases, publications, maps and media interviews;
- different web and social media platforms, including its own humanitarian news network;
- multimedia products using video, photos and graphics;
- creative awareness-raising campaigns; and
- essential information channels for affected communities.

Communication is the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information...

"...The process of communication is defined by the technology of communication, the characteristics of the senders and receivers of information, their cultural codes of reference and protocols of communication, and the scope of the communication process."

Manuel Castells in Communication Power

Example on the South Sudan crisis. Both messages use the social medium platform Twitter

RETWITTEADO POR UNOCHA SOUTH SUDAN
FAO in Emergencies @FAOemergencies · 30 de abr.
Fears of food and nutrition crisis in next months if situation in #SouthSudan doesn't improve. See what #UNFAO doing: bit.ly/RStqk7
← 5 2 ...

RETWITTEADO POR UNOCHA SOUTH SUDAN
UN News Centre @UN_News_Centre · 30 de abr.
With #SouthSudan on verge of catastrophe, @UNrightswire chief urges country's leaders to act ow.ly/wl629

UNOCHA South Sudan @OCHASouthSudan · 3 de may.
#SouthSudan: 2 crisis, 1 country. @theIRC

Of a population of 10 Million
7 MILLION could face
STARVATION
in a matter of months.

10,000 DEAD
since the conflict began.
Protected areas are under attack

- Mosques
- Churches
- Hospitals

← 63 14 ... Ver más fotos

This message reports the main figures related to the crisis.

The role of the Food Security Coordinator in advocacy activities

In all crises, the role of the FSC Coordinator is essential. The CC is expected to achieve concrete tasks in order to coordinate efforts and facilitate donor relations within a Cluster.

Let's suppose a crisis has recently occurred on the ground the situation is chaotic and the resources available are not clear. However, the Cluster needs to **advocate for funding and attention** to the crisis...

What would you do?

As a first step, **the Food Security Coordinator** need to cooperate with experts in advocacy and communication activities. So she/he needs to identify advocacy expertise and capacities within the Cluster and establish a **standing working group** to develop appropriate advocacy strategies and communications. Then, the coordinator would work with that group to **identify the main issues** for which advocacy is required, and develop advocacy strategies that will get the messages to relevant decision-makers.

The FSC Coordinator always works within the framework of an overall, inter-sectoral strategy established by the HC and HCT. Within that framework, in collaboration with the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLA), and on behalf of the Cluster and sector as a whole, the FSC Coordinator has further responsibilities, mainly related to **DONORS and COMMUNICATION**.

During a crisis who is responsible for the first contact with donors?

In coordination with the two Cluster Lead Agencies, the FSC Coordinator should take the initiative to **contact local donor representatives**, any foundations and potential private sector donors represented in the country, to explain food security priorities and resource needs. As Coordinator, needs to map the particular interests of each potential donor and **keep them informed** of needs and developments on a regular basis. The CLA and CC should also **link potential donors** with specific Cluster partners, when appropriate.

What are some of the issues you highlight in relations with donors?

For example, according to the context, FSC Coordinator ensures that all potential donors understand the importance of, and possibilities for, promoting **early recovery** in agriculture and other livelihood activities. This is aimed at promoting self-reliance and minimizing the period of dependence on food or other forms of relief distribution.

How does the coordinator manage communication with them?

As mentioned earlier, it is the responsibility of the FSC Coordinator to ensure clear and detailed written communication with donors. But it is also important that all communication messages are reviewed and cleared by the CLAs and Cluster partners before they are shared with donors.

As well as preparing written materials, when appropriate the coordinator encourages potential donors to participate as observers in **Cluster coordination meetings** and briefings. It is also important to invite donors to join **assessment missions** (as observers) and **project site visits**, and to support joint donor fact-finding missions.

Among other advocacy activities, an FSC Coordinator should:

- invite donors to join assessment missions (as observers) and project site visits;
- prepare information briefs to support resource mobilization for the sector/ Cluster as a whole;
- provide detailed technical material and presentations.

Summary

Advocacy involves communicating/sending appropriate messages, designed to target the right people (recipients), at the right time, and using the right channel, with the objective of attracting interest, support or funding to improve a situation.

The goal of advocacy is to create specific action or change by influencing the decisions of policy-makers.

When creating an advocacy message, it is important to reflect on:

- the issue of food security, for instance, food availability;
- the objective: (for example, funding, access, protection, attention, rights);
- who are the stakeholders – donors, government, affected population, HC, other Clusters?
- the strategy – will your message be a public one, evidence base, sector bulletin, and/or for the news media.

Then you need to develop your message and your plan.

FSC Coordinators are required to prepare and provide communications and messages for donors and other stakeholders, and promote contacts with donors to map their interests and keep them informed of needs and developments.

All these activities must be undertaken within the framework of an overall inter-sectoral strategy established by the HC and HCT, and on behalf of all Cluster partners.