

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination

Lesson: The Global Food Security Cluster – Background and Objectives

Text-only version

In partnership with:



In this lesson

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination.....	0
Learning objectives.....	2
Introduction.....	2
What is food security?.....	2
Cross-cutting issues - Key questions.....	4
Why have a Food Security Cluster?.....	4
The aim of the FSC.....	6
Cross-cutting issues standards.....	7
Partnership.....	7
gFSC structure.....	8
Country level coordination arrangements.....	9
Cluster activation.....	13
Cluster deactivation.....	15
Summary.....	17

Learning objectives

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

- provide a definition of food security, using the four multi-dimensional pillars;
- recognize the importance of partner engagement in the Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC);
- describe how the Food Security Cluster (FSC) intervenes in a food crisis;
- identify different coordination solutions in a crisis situation; and
- describe when and why clusters are activated and deactivated.

Introduction

This lesson explains the reasoning behind the formation of the Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) and illustrates its role and objectives. It highlights the importance of partner engagement in the FSC at global and country level and how this is reflected in the four Principles of Partnership. This lesson also illustrates the different possible coordination solutions in a crisis and the clusters activation protocol.

Let's start by reviewing the concept of food security and its multi-dimensional pillars, and learn how the Food Security Cluster intervenes in a food security crisis situation.

The **Cluster Approach** operates at two levels, global and local. At **global level**, clusters work to strengthen the overall response capacity. At **country level**, clusters focus on building relationships with local actors.

What is food security?

The concept of food security has evolved greatly during the past fifty years. In 1996, the World Food Summit recognized the **multi-dimensional character of food security** and produced this definition, which is still widely accepted today by food security actors.

FOOD SECURITY

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The multi-dimensional character of food security is commonly summarized in four main areas or pillars, which interact in a sequential manner: First, food must be available; then households must have access

to it; they must use it appropriately; and finally, the whole system must be stable, i.e. food must be available, accessible and used appropriately throughout the year.

➤ **Stability** involves reducing the risks of adverse effects on the other dimensions of food security. It refers to the temporal dimension of food security; that is, the time frame during which food security is being considered. Examples include the stability of prices and government policies, constant physical access to markets and agricultural inputs.

Stability refers to consistency and reliability in food availability and access: households should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks or cyclical events.

➤ **Food utilization** by households in specific population groups refers to the use that households make of the food to which they have access and individuals' ability to absorb and metabolize nutrients. Food utilization depends on:

- ✓ the ways in which food is processed, prepared and stored (including the quality of water and hygiene practices), both at manufacturer and household level;
- ✓ feeding practices, particularly for individuals with special needs such as young children, the elderly, sick people and pregnant and lactating women; for example in certain contexts, some foods are reserved for men, while others are reserved for other population segments, or specific foods are considered appropriate or not for pregnant women;
- ✓ the sharing of food within the household and the extent to which this corresponds to individuals' nutritional needs - growth, pregnancy, lactation, etc.;
- ✓ the diversity of diets and its effect on the health status of each member of the household.

➤ **Food access** of households in specific population groups refers to the **ability of households to regularly acquire adequate amounts of appropriate food for a nutritious diet**. Means of access may include:

- ✓ own production - of crops, livestock poultry or fish;
- ✓ hunting, fishing or gathering wild foods;
- ✓ income to buy food at markets, shops, etc.;
- ✓ cash for exchange - exchange of items for food, or different kinds of food, to complement diets;
- ✓ remittances and gifts from friends, relatives or community;
- ✓ cash transfers from government or aid agencies.

Food access does not just refer to a household's purchasing power to acquire food on the market, but also to the functionality and everyone's **possibility of physically accessing the marketplace** in a safe way and in a reasonable time, at reasonable cost. This pillar also looks at the social acceptance of practices related to the acquisition of food, paying special attention to gender, age, disability and protection issues that are related to these activities.

► **Food availability** refers to the **actual availability of food stocks in the area of concern**. This may be any kind of food, irrespective of its provenance, including local production, imports (international or from other areas of the same country) and food aid. Food may be made available to consumers through the market, or from government/household food stocks. Food availability is determined by:

production - food produced in the area;

stocks - food held by traders, in government reserves and by households in the area;

trade - food brought into (and taken out of) the area through market mechanisms;

food aid - food brought into the area by the government and/or aid agencies.

Cross-cutting issues - Key questions

Key questions to ask when considering possible gender, age, disability and ethnicity issues related to access to food could include:



Are there any risks for women, girls, boys or men in reaching the site where food is available, such as risk of sexual abuse and exploitation?

Do cultural norms regarding women's mobility affect their ability to access sites where food is available?

What are the customs, culture and traditions that may limit access to and control over food (considering land, food production, markets etc.) for women and men within the household/community or any sub-section (e.g. ethnic, caste, racial) of the population at large?

Why have a Food Security Cluster?

About **795 million people** in the world, or one in nine, suffer from hunger, according to the State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI 2015) www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/c2cda20d-eb9b-4467-8a94-038087fe0f6e/

The report confirms a positive trend, which has seen the number of hungry people decline globally by 167 million over the past decade. This is a significant achievement, given the frequency and severity of devastating droughts, floods and storms, as well as destruction and suffering resulting from complex human induced emergencies, civil strife and the collapse into chaos of shattered countries.

What is the Food Security Cluster responsible for?

The FSC is responsible for providing overall **standards and guidance** to develop emergency **strategies and implementation plans** at country level. These plans complement and support national authorities' existing efforts to address key food security issues related to availability, access and use in a timely and effective manner.

Objective of the Global Food Security Cluster

The **gFSC's objective** is to ensure a more predictable and comprehensive response to food insecurity during humanitarian crises.

The Food Security Cluster became operational in April 2011 as the eleventh global Cluster under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) architecture. On average a country-level FSC represents a partnership of an average 68 stakeholders (<http://foodsecuritycluster.net/partners>), including the UN, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Many different factors can have an effect on the food security of affected populations during a crisis (such as **natural disasters**, **violent conflicts**, **political turmoil** and **economic crises**). To respond to these needs, a multitude of actors with different capacities, geographical focus and technical specialization need to be involved.

Coordination is necessary to map all needs in a timely and appropriate manner, sharing information and avoiding gaps and duplication in the response. If all the actors don't coordinate, they might all cover the needs of one community, leaving other communities without assistance. This would not only mean that **resources are wasted** due to **duplication**, but can also cause serious **damage to the affected populations**.

! Food Security Clusters help to coordinate food security responses in countries affected by large-scale natural disasters, conflicts or protracted crises.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are designated global **Cluster Lead Agencies** (CLA). In many countries, international NGOs assist them as co-facilitators.

Cluster Lead Agencies play an **important role in coordination** as they are responsible for ensuring better predictability, preparedness and coordinated inter-agency response, in their particular areas of activity. The **global CLAs** are also generally appointed as **country lead agencies**. However, this may vary according to the location of the emergency and the global CLAs presence and capacity in the location.

To whom are the Cluster Lead Agencies accountable?

Global level	Country level
<p>At global level, CLAs are responsible to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). The Global Food Security Cluster provides direction and support to country clusters by: developing tools and guidance, conducting training, and providing surge support. It also provides a comprehensive communication outreach within the Cluster, with partners and with the wider humanitarian community.</p>	<p>At country level, CLAs are accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). At country level, Cluster Lead Agencies are also the "provider of last resort" for their sector. This means that, where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, the Cluster Lead Agency must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fill critical gaps identified by the cluster, in case no other actor is capable of doing so.</p>

"Food security needs for individuals and communities in humanitarian crises are met."

Vision of the gFSC

"To ensure improved coordination of preparedness, response and recovery actions at national and global levels."

Mission statement that supports the vision

The aim of the FSC

The FSC aims to **strengthen food security responses** in crisis situations, **mainstream early recovery** approaches and **enhance national capacity** to:

- deliver predictable and accountable leadership and coordination for food security responses;

- strengthen existing national and local humanitarian management and coordination systems, building on local capacities through the active participation of affected women and men at all ages; and
- optimize collaboration and partnerships among governments, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donors and other stakeholders to ensure a holistic and timely response.

Cross-cutting issues standards

The Global Food Security Cluster is committed to ensuring that humanitarian response planning and implementation take into **account appropriate standards, indicators and cross-cutting issues**, while **targeting the most vulnerable** within the affected populations. The gFSC addresses food security related, key cross-cutting issues in policies and decision-making processes, as well as implementing them in humanitarian response operations.

Partnership

Partnership is at the core of the gFSC’s work. Each partner is unique and the overall diversity allows us to address the broad spectrum of food security in a coordinated manner. The gFSC uses **three levels of engagement**: partners, observers, and associates.



The **Principles of Partnership** (Equality, Complementarity, Transparency, Responsibility and Results-Oriented Approach) are illustrated in **Lesson “Humanitarian Coordination and Cluster Approach”**.

Different ways in which various organizations can participate in the Global Food Security Cluster

Partners



Partners are organizations which have an operational mandate that includes assisting vulnerable people to prepare for, respond to or recover from the impacts on food security of natural or man-made disasters. They include: **International and national NGOs, international organizations and UN Agencies**. Partners have the following characteristics:

- a commitment to humanitarian principles and the Principles of Partnership;
- participate in actions that specifically improve accountability to affected populations;

- participate regularly within the cluster and consistently engage in the gFSC's collective work;
- the capacity and willingness to contribute to the gFSC Strategic Plan;
- work cooperatively with other gFSC partners to ensure effective use of available resources, including sharing information and organizational talents;
- request to be considered a partner of the gFSC.

Observers



Observers participate in consultations and discussions but remain neutral on decision-making. At present, the organizations with a role as Observer are:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Associates



Associates include other **Global Clusters and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**, which are not directly engaged in food security activities as Partners. Associates' activities are closely interlinked with the work of the Partner organizations, with which there are various forms of collaboration.



gFSC partners, associates and observers <http://foodsecuritycluster.net/partners>

gFSC structure

The Global Food Security Cluster structure involves the following three categories:



Global Support Team

The Global Support Team (GST) is an implementation unit, drawn from gFSC organizations. The leader of the GST is the Global Cluster Coordinator (GCC), who together with the GST, is housed at WFP Headquarters, Rome. The gFSC Support Team is composed of staff from WFP and FAO professional categories, along with finance and administrative support. In addition, the GST is often enriched by secondments of staff from global partners.

The **Global Support Team's role** is to support and enable country clusters, as well as the network of gFSC partners to achieve the vision, mission and implementation of identified priorities.



Working Groups

Working Groups are established as needed to **provide specific strategic technical direction** to the gFSC **on key areas** of humanitarian food security related responses. In 2016, there were six working groups: (1) Inter-Cluster Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, (2) Urban Food Security Working Group (UFSWG), (3) Programme Quality Working Group (PQWG), (4) Cash and Markets Working Group, (5) New Technology and Innovation Working Group, (6) Preparedness and Resilience Working Group (PRWG). The Working Groups are reviewed every six months by the gFSC at global partner meetings.



Global Partners

Global Partners are directly involved and lead some specific gFSC activities. They also ensure that their colleagues at country, regional and global level are aware of, participate in and support the cluster at all levels. Standby partners provide an invaluable contribution for surge deployments in the aftermath of disasters. Stand-by Partners are organizations which provide additional capacity in personnel and facilities to support the Food Security Cluster in responding to emergencies.

The **Food Security Cluster website** <http://fscluster.org/> is maintained and regularly updated to provide in-depth information, tools and guidance to country Food Security Clusters and Global Partners. It includes a repository, as well as tools and guidance notes. The website remains the key channel for information sharing and dissemination of standardized tools and reporting templates.

Country level coordination arrangements

The cluster approach is not the only humanitarian coordination solution.

In some cases, it may coexist **with other forms of national or international coordination**, and its application must take into account the specific needs of a country and the context. Using a cluster approach in every emergency might waste resources and impede action by governments, which are primarily responsible for providing humanitarian assistance to people under their jurisdiction. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters and government-led emergency coordination mechanisms can be defined as IASC clusters and Government-led emergency.

IASC clusters ➡ **IASC clusters** are formally activated clusters created when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained in their ability to respond to identified needs in line with humanitarian principles. A formally activated cluster has specific characteristics and is **accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)** through the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA), as well as to **national authorities** and to **people affected** by the crisis. Clusters are a **temporary coordination solution** and efforts should be made as soon as appropriate and possible to hand over coordination to the relevant authorities.

Government-led emergency ➡ **Government-led emergency** or crisis sectoral coordination mechanisms report to designated government bodies. The lifespan of emergency sector coordination is defined by government policies or declarations. International humanitarian support can increase national capacity, underpinned by the principles of the cluster approach.

Case study: Aristopulous

In the Aristopulous response, there is representation from many disaster relief actors. The **national government plays a primary role** in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. The scale of this disaster exceeds the government's ability to meet all the needs of the affected population, so other actors have joined to support the response.

Aristopulous report update

- It has been 72 hours since a category 5 typhoon has made landfall on Aristopulous.
- The government of Aristopulous has welcomed international assistance however they have stated this must be carried out in close coordination with the government and that they will give the final approval to any strategy for intervention.
- There is a Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team in place.
- The Emergency Relief Coordinator has declared an L3 emergency in Aristopulous.
- Clusters that already existed are meeting and additional clusters are likely to be activated.

Coordination is a means to an end and coordination arrangements need to be tailored to the operational country context to ensure system-wide preparedness, technical capacity and clearly designated leadership and accountability.

A decision to activate clusters may be made when, as in the case of Aristopulous, a government’s capacity to coordinate is limited or constrained. However, **extra international coordination capacity** may be valuable even when a government is able to lead and coordinate a response.



Clusters are activated as part of an international emergency response, based on an analysis of humanitarian need, existing coordination mechanisms and capacity on the ground. The type of coordination also changes depending on the crisis (slow onset, natural disaster, protracted crisis etc.).

COORDINATION MECHANISM	EMERGENCY PHASE	RECOVERY PHASE
Government coordination capacity is adequate and not constrained	Government provides leadership. International partners may reinforce the Government’s coordination capacity.	Government leadership continues. Humanitarian coordination structures may transition to recovery and to development structures. International actors withdraw or support recovery, and help to prepare for future crisis.
Government coordination is limited or constrained	Cluster are activated where needed. Where appropriate and possible, co-leadership with Government bodies and NGO partners is strongly encouraged.	Cluster are de-activated or devolve to national emergency or recovery and development coordination structures, where appropriate and possible. Government coordination is strengthened, where appropriate and possible.

In Aristopulous, the government is affected, just like its citizens. Through an early assessment of the situation, it has been found out that most services and systems are damaged. Part of your job will be to find ways to **work with whatever government structures still exist**, instead of working around them or ignoring them.

! Remember, the international community is here to **assist and help fill the gaps**, not to replace the role of the Aristopulous Government.

Coordination requires commitment and allocation of **time, expertise** and **personnel**. There are **challenges** inherent in such commitment - especially in humanitarian crises. However, experience has shown that meeting these challenges results in more effective, more just and appropriate response

to needs, particularly in the case of ensuring food security for affected populations. Some **solutions to these challenges** include:

- ➔ the need to focus more on the impact of change, as opposed to the process for implementing change;
- ➔ better coordinated efforts;
- ➔ stronger feedback and complaints mechanisms that encourage more accountability to affected populations; and
- ➔ greater national ownership of the humanitarian response.

Examples: Coordination solutions

Southern Turkey (Gaziantep)

In Southern Turkey, the Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group (FSLWG) was created, building on the NGO Forum created in January 2013. The NGO Forum was established to enhance coordination between the 12 NGOs running cross-border operations to affected populations in Northern Syria. Given the limited coordination occurring bilaterally or at a thematic level at the time, the NGO Forum conducted a 3W's exercise and then started forming various sector working groups, including the FSLWG. However, the capacity of the FSLWG was limited and support was requested.

A gFSC scoping mission arrived in April 2013 to work with actors on the ground and assess what was already in place together with the NGO Forum, as well as how that could be strengthened and adapted to serve a more inclusive set of actors. It was agreed that - although WFP and FAO were not present at the time in Southern Turkey to assist with cross-border operations - these two agencies would support the coordination mechanism through the deployment of a full-time coordinator. Since then, the coordinator has worked alongside the NGO co-chair - currently GOAL - in a relationship of mutual understanding and respect, an important element of FSLWG's success.

Bangladesh

The success of the current cluster system stems from the fact that the **FSC is set up within the existing national structures**. Specifically, it is structured around Local Consultative Groups (LCGs), which have links to other relevant government structures.

These strategic groups (the LCGs) link the disaster management cycle from resilience to development. Being complementary in nature, this facilitates humanitarian and development work, and ensures that the clusters are working in line with the long-term strategic objectives of the

government. Other key features of the FSC collaboration with the Bangladesh government and other humanitarian clusters are:

- the delivery oriented nature of government meetings;
- the active engagement of key line ministries in the clusters and the importance with which they view coordination; and
- the effective communications exchanges across clusters and with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) (of which the government is a member).

The role of the Bangladesh Government within the cluster is also clear - the Government is the lead on triggers and should be the first to collect primary data and respond to an emergency; after which the humanitarian clusters are called in to fill gaps.

Cluster activation

When are clusters activated at country level?

The **criteria for cluster activation** are met when:

✘ Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.

✘ Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles, due to:

- the scale of need;
- the number of actors involved;
- the need for a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or
- other constraints on the ability to respond or apply humanitarian principles.

Clusters should be activated in an emergency when there is a **humanitarian need**, lack of **coordination capacity**, operational **complexity**, need for improved **emergency response**.

Under the Transformative Agenda, IASC Principals agreed that **activation of clusters must be** more strategic, less automatic and time limited.

HCs should only recommend the activation of clusters when there is an **identified gap in the enabling environment** warranting their activation. To ensure that clusters continue to operate only while they

are strictly needed, **plans to deactivate and transition clusters** should be prepared as soon as possible after activation.



Building the capacity of local partners and government should be an objective from the outset.

HC + HCT To determine which clusters should be activated and who should lead them, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) will look at initial assessments and form a recommendation. The selection of CLAs ideally mirrors global arrangements; but this is not always possible and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead. Under the IASC Transformative Agenda, Cluster Lead Agencies were encouraged to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed and supported sharing of cluster leadership with NGOs wherever feasible.



ERC

This recommendation is sent to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who submits it to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and global cluster lead agencies for approval.



IASC

Once approved, clusters are established so that humanitarian organizations can coordinate resources, prioritize activities and define their respective roles and responsibilities.

How to determine whether a Food Security Cluster is needed?

The country level representatives of the **gFSC lead agencies** (FAO and WFP) should jointly, and to the extent possible in consultation with the **Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator** and with **national counterparts** and other **key food security partners**, carry out the following activities:

1. Rapidly **review existing coordination arrangements** for food security and determine whether they are capable of assuring **effective coordination of**, and **accountability for**, the humanitarian response:
 - If **yes** - agree on any measures needed to strengthen the existing coordination mechanisms;
 - If **no** - recommend to the HC/HCT the activation of the Food Security Cluster (FSC) and propose leadership arrangements and how the cluster would interact with any existing food security related mechanisms.

2. **Inform** the gFSC Coordinator, the **FAO** Director of Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation and the **WFP** Director of Emergencies.
3. If cluster leadership is shared between two "co-leads", following the global level arrangement, **define the specific contribution of each agency to the cluster capacity.**

Cluster deactivation

As mentioned, clusters are time-bound.

FSC is **activated where response and coordination gaps exist**, and national response or coordination capacity cannot meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles.

The cluster should be **deactivated when those gaps no longer exist.**



Cluster deactivation is the closure of a formally activated cluster, with transfer of cluster core functions to government or other crisis coordination mechanisms.

Cluster transition refers to the process (and potentially the activities) by which the transfer of leadership and accountabilities is planned and implemented, leading to deactivation.

Deactivation includes the **transfer of core functions** from clusters to other structures: **from clusters** that have international leadership and accountability and **to other structures**, including those led by national authorities or others that are development focused. These could be existing pre-crisis structures, or new ones.

Where clusters are not formally activated, it is recommended that **regular reviews** of the existing humanitarian coordination architecture should be carried out for the same purpose.

! It is important to review the need for clusters on a regular basis.

There should be an **annual review** conducted by each HC/HCT, reporting to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) of the ongoing status of clusters in every country operation. The review is made with a view to recommending continuing, deactivating, scaling down and/or handing over clusters, as appropriate.

Where clusters are not formally activated, it is recommended that **regular reviews** of the existing humanitarian coordination architecture should be carried out for the same purpose.

Deactivation of formally activated clusters may be considered when at least one of the **conditions** that led to its activation is no **longer present**, i.e.:

➔ The humanitarian situation improves significantly, reducing humanitarian needs and consequently reducing associated response and coordination gaps.

➔ National structures acquire sufficient capacity to coordinate and meet residual humanitarian needs in line with humanitarian principles.

The transition and deactivation processes

<i>...are initiated and led by the HC, in consultation with the HCT</i>	They are initiated and led by the HC, in consultation with the HCT, wherever possible in close collaboration with national authorities and supported by OCHA. Cluster Lead Agencies, cluster partners and national counterparts should also be involved in drafting and agreeing the review and its recommendations, and preparing transition or deactivation plans.
<i>..are based on assessment of national capacity</i>	They are based on assessment of national capacity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence, structure and resources of relevant response and coordination mechanisms. Where clusters are able to hand over to national counterparts, transition will be easier and probably faster. • Deactivation can also be induced by a government declaration that an emergency is over, shifting the focus to recovery and development coordination structures. • The functions of some clusters (for example, protection or WASH) are likely to be transferred to a variety of national structures. • Not all clusters have to be deactivated at the same time; the timing of deactivation is related to ongoing needs and the presence or absence of national structures able to manage the functions in question.
<i>..take account of the context</i>	They take account of the context, including the scale of residual or continued humanitarian needs, and the ability of successor mechanisms to respond in line with humanitarian principles. Deactivation in sudden onset crises may be more rapid than in complex or protracted emergencies. The probability of recurring or new disasters (and the costs of closure and subsequent re-establishment) may outweigh the benefits of deactivation,

especially if investments have been made in capacity-building and preparedness.

..are guided by early recovery and resilience-building objectives

They are guided by early recovery and resilience-building objectives:

- Integrating early recovery objectives in transition and deactivation plans ensures that humanitarian actors consider the sustainability of their response, take steps to build national and local capacity, emphasize preparedness and support long-term recovery and development objectives.
- Where feasible, clusters should share cluster leadership with national actors from the outset, and work with national counterparts to build their capacity to assume coordination roles in humanitarian preparedness and response, as well as in recovery and development. Care should be taken to avoid transferring leadership before capacity is in place.

Summary

The **gFSC's objective** is to ensure a more predictable and comprehensive response to food insecurity in humanitarian crises.

Food Security Clusters help to coordinate food security responses in countries affected by large-scale natural disasters, conflicts or protracted crises.

Partnership is at the core of the work of the gFSC. The gFSC uses three levels of engagement: Partners, Observers and Associates.

The **Food Security Cluster's purpose** is to respond in a proportionate, appropriate and timely manner, and to support the implementation and accountability of humanitarian food security responses.

The cluster approach **is not the only humanitarian coordination solution**. In some cases, it may coexist with other forms of national or international coordination.

Clusters are activated in an emergency when there is a humanitarian need, lack of coordination capacity, operational complexity and the need for an improved emergency response.

Clusters should be deactivated when response and coordination gaps no longer exist.