

Global Education Cluster

Global Education Cluster Strategic Planning Meeting Istanbul 9-12 September 2014

SUMMARY

This document summarizes main discussion points from the Global Education Cluster Strategic Planning meeting. The meeting brought together the Education Cluster Unit (ECU) including Rapid Response Team (RRT) members with Education Cluster Working Group (ECWG) members, country cluster coordination staff, and consultant team. A full report is also available. Additional information (presentations, reference documents) is available on [Box](#).

A. Meeting Objectives

1. Provide space and a forum for exchange and learning in priority issues/topics , with a focus on developing consensus around the key strategic priorities for the Global Education Cluster strategic plan during the next 2 – 4 years
2. Discuss the latest developments at global level and outline their implications for Education Clusters and Cluster Partners
3. Serve as feedback mechanism to help the Global Education Cluster, regional stakeholders and Education Cluster Working Group members to better focus and direct their support to the field.

Guiding Principles

- Throughout consideration will be given as to where information will come from to guide priorities, how analysis and decision making will take place and the IM systems needed to support this.
- For every priority identified, the role of the ECU, country level Clusters, Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs) and Partners will be reflected upon.

B. Key Discussion Points and Outcomes to inform the next Strategic Plan related to the six core cluster functions

The meeting discussion benefitted from research on implementation of the previous strategic plan carried out by the consultants through an online survey and key informants interviews. The full results of the exercise can be found in the internal briefing note [Reflections on the Implementation of the Global Education Cluster Strategic Plan 2011-2014](#).

Strategic Plan

The main purpose of the meeting was structured consultation on the priorities for the Education Cluster's next strategic plan. Participants were asked to identify priorities by reflecting on the role of the Education Cluster, needed products and services, and the best structure for delivery. Two sessions, one on reflections from global partners on their role in the Education Cluster Working Group (ECWG), and another on challenges and expectations from country level Education Clusters, also informed discussions. Participants were asked to articulate the priorities as much as possible within the framework of the six core cluster functions in the Cluster Coordination Reference Module (CCRM), and identify the Cluster's responsibilities vs. other those of other actors. The following were the main points generated for each of the core functions:

1. Support Service Delivery:

- The Education Cluster at field and global level needs to ensure inclusive coordination platforms, with appropriate coordination capacity, including staff with the right profile. L3 emergencies are priority (in these contexts two national level coordinators and an Information Management Officer (IMO) are recommended), but it is equally important in other countries with formally activated clusters.

- Management systems require improvement, in particular regards predictable and quality human resources. Suggestions are a welcome pack and induction for new coordinators, sharing contact lists, guidance to facilitate handover and transition, expanding the RRT, strengthening inter-cluster relations, partnering with local NGOs, clarity on roles and responsibilities of CLAs and cluster members, building partner capacity, clarity on roles and responsibilities in mixed settings, RRT deployment, etc.
- Ensuring that thematic gaps are filled is also an area for improvement.

2. Inform HC/HCT Strategic Decision Making:

- Building relationships with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT) is important to ensure education is an integral part of response.
- Roles and responsibilities of CLAs should be clarified; how can management structures and cluster's own work facilitate links with CLA senior management so they make the case for education in emergencies (EiE) at HCT level.
- A main role of country clusters is coordination of needs assessments (NA), and provide inputs to ensure education is adequately reflected in joint NAs. The Global Education Cluster (GEC)'s capacity to support NAs needs to be strengthened.
- The GEC should mobilize support among members to fill capacity gaps.
- Clarification of accountabilities in non L3 emergencies is needed, including for countries with formally activated education clusters, and countries with other EiE coordination mechanisms.

3. Plan and Develop Strategy:

- At field and global level, the Education Cluster should ensure the quality of response strategies and plans, and inclusion of integrated outcomes. This could be achieved by reviewing the Strategic Response Plan (SRP). The GEC should prioritize L3 emergencies and prioritized countries. Competency of cluster coordinators in strategic planning needs be enhanced.
- Links with development sector coordination mechanisms needs to be strengthened, the GEC could develop guidance to build these linkages. SRPs should be aligned with existing sector plans.
- Cluster partner capacity gaps could be addressed through trainings on NA and project management. The role of the cluster is to assess partner capacities; delivery of training should be the responsibility of (global) partners.
- Greater focus on using information effectively for planning and advocacy is needed.
- Improving inter-cluster relations is essential, compiling lessons learned and guidance on better integration with other sectors, could be a start.

4. Monitor and Evaluate (M&E) Performance:

- The Education Cluster needs to continue to improve in this fast evolving area. Country clusters need to develop an M&E framework for SRP implementation, the GEC should clarify its responsibilities for support. Remote support on Information Management (IM), building more IM capacity at regional/country level, were flagged as possible ways to improve M&E. Ongoing needs analysis and monitoring methodologies for volatile contexts are needed.
- The GEC should ensure IM systems (3/4Ws, sitreps, website, dashboard, etc.) are in place and IM capacity gaps filled; this includes measure effectiveness of ongoing efforts. Lessons learned should be collected, disseminated and applied.
- Accountability to affected populations (AAP) approaches for education need to be developed.
- OCHA online reporting is one way to monitor the response; harmonized templates and reporting systems are needed.

5. Build National Capacity in Preparedness/Contingency Planning:

- Further discussion and decision-making is needed to define the role of the cluster in capacity building and preparedness (much of this needs to be decided across clusters at senior levels).
- At field level, Education Clusters need to be aware of and link to existing coordination mechanisms, and work to strengthen linkages with the development sector. The GEC needs to provide support to

priority countries on alignment with existing mechanisms. Clusters should encourage MoEs/development partners to strengthen EMIS and existing systems to integrate EiE.

- Clusters should engage with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE); the GEC could provide support on how to engage with GPE and in GPE processes for funding.
- Work with Ministries of Education (MoE) in an holistic response (including all levels of education, from ECD to tertiary education) needs attention.
- In country the cluster should identify key partnerships, assess partner capacity, advocate, build relationships and strengthen collaboration with local NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs), in particular in chronic crisis contexts.
- Transition plans must include capacity building for MoE in coordination functions and NA.
- Training on conflict sensitive approaches for clusters is important.

6. Advocacy:

- Country clusters need to advocate to ensure education is an integral part of emergency response. The GEC needs to advocate for education cluster activation, and supports country clusters on advocacy.
- Country level clusters should advocate for education to be fairly represented in pooled funds and appeals, but fundraising is the responsibility of partners. Advocacy for a fair share of humanitarian funding for EiE should continue at global level.
- Education Clusters, global and country levels, should be aware of donor strategies, share these with cluster members.
- Education Clusters, global and country level, need to advocate internally with CLA management to ensure they support clusters in country and fulfil their responsibilities as CLAs.
- A strategic global approach to advocacy needs to include links to other sectors, links with donors, cluster participation in the INEE Education Cannot Wait advocacy group, links with the post 2015 agenda. A specific advocacy point (with GPE and others) is including EiE into all education sector plans.
- Support to country Education Clusters on advocacy is a key priority; suggestions included:
 - development of cluster advocacy plans at global and country level;
 - creation of tools and templates for advocacy at country level with different stakeholders;
 - setting up of flow of information around advocacy needs of country clusters;
 - mapping of donors, policies and opportunities;
 - building the evidence base (collection, analysis and presentation of data);
 - advocacy training;
 - up-to-date advocacy briefs;
 - sharing good practices
 - enhance GEC capacity in advocacy (e.g. additional staff)

The meeting also identified unresolved issues requiring further discussion and elaboration, at the meeting and/or over the period of the new strategic plan:

- Partnerships:
 - Greater clarity on the role of the Education Cluster vs. the role of INEE
 - Engagement with the Global Coalition to Protection Education from Attack (GCPEA) on issues related to attacks on schools/Lucens guidelines
 - Engagement in mixed settings (IDPs and refugees) (see notes on specific session)
- Capacity building:
 - Who is responsible for building technical capacity of cluster members (INEE Minimum Standards, EiE, etc.), and providing technical support? Should the GEC help mobilize support, by linking up with INEE, global cluster partners, GPE?
 - Who is responsible for the many aspects of building coordination capacity, between GEC, CLAs, OCHA, country clusters, etc.
- Other:
 - Type/level of support by GEC to non-cluster countries and L1 and/or localized emergencies.
 - Education and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

- Ensuring gender/cross-cutting issues/people-centred approach are integrated, implemented.
- Cluster transition
- Quality of education (new focus on learning)
- Guidance on building relationships with MoE
- Amount of time spent/role cluster coordinators on funding (in particular pooled funds)

Structure/governance model of the Education Cluster

It is important that the structure and governance model is fit-for-purpose to deliver the new strategic plan. The meeting looked at the organisation model, linkages within the education sector and various contexts the cluster are working in.

Organisation model: Which organisation model would be best for the cluster's future role? The discussion was framed around the cluster six core functions, focussing on field support and coordination, to identify what worked well, what didn't work well.

- The group identified three pillars, operational, strategic and technical support, and partners were mapped out in relation to these three pillars.
- Conclusion was that further discussion is needed to define the responsibilities of the ECWG, whether the cluster is missing key partners, how to work with operational partners and non-operational partners, how to engage new partners and find new ways of working.
- Issues to take into account are how to design and implement the M&E of performance; building national capacity, advocacy, making sure the voices from the field are captured and ensuring quality, and inclusiveness of the response.

Linkages within the education sector:

- Linkages at national/regional level: this involved mapping out actors, identifying gaps and weaknesses of each actor, and suggesting actions to strengthen the links:
 - better linkages with HCT through CLAs, with MoEs and existing education coordination mechanisms, linking SRP to education sector plans, internal advocacy with CLAs so they better take on their responsibilities for the cluster, clarification of roles of UNHCR and the cluster in mixed settings , etc).
- Linkages at global level: this involved a rough mapping of partners and initiatives, reviewed in light of the cluster's core functions to identify priority linkages:
 - maintain strategic relations with OCHA;
 - better linkages with GPE, UNESCO and UNESCO-IIEP for building the national capacity;
 - advocacy: continued engagement in the Education Cannot Wait working group, and greater role of ECWG members in capturing the voices from the field and translating those needs into global advocacy efforts.

Cluster/coordination types: This identified the various contexts clusters are working in, the trigger and type of support needed and delivery mechanism. Broad categories of contexts identified were:

- L3 emergencies: The Education Cluster needs to make sure appropriate management systems/agreements are in place, with the appropriate staff on the ground, along with IM systems, capacity building, advocacy and M&E support.
- Non-L3 emergencies, active cluster, protracted/complex/cyclical crisis: The level of support will depend on the scale of the emergency, and focus on technical support for preparedness, advocacy.
- Mixed IDP and refugee situations: Clarity on roles and responsibilities of UNHCR and the cluster is key, also information sharing between countries, clusters and UNHCR. Development of guidance, documenting lessons learned is key as more and more crises concern mixed settings.
- 'Undeclared' emergencies, no formal IASC cluster: The GEC should provide mainly remote support, linking the country cluster to regional offices for support on capacity building, advocacy, M&E, documents review.

C. Key Discussion Points and Outcomes to inform the next Strategic Plan related to key themes

Several sessions were dedicated to key emerging issues, and other issues/topics that warrant more detailed discussion and consideration, at the meeting and/or over the period of the new strategic plan.

Advocacy

Following presentations on the INEE Education Cannot Wait Working Group, NRC-SC review of donors' humanitarian policies, the Global Education Cluster's engagement in advocacy initiatives at global and country level, and field perspectives on advocacy, priorities for the Education Cluster's advocacy efforts at global level and support to country clusters were suggested as follows:

- Bridging the humanitarian-development gap, increased funding for EiE, and recognition of education as a crucial component of humanitarian response are still key advocacy goals.
- The Education Cluster should engage selectively in advocacy initiatives at global level, linked to its comparative advantage and added value.
- Key advocacy targets for the Education Cluster are OCHA to ensure education is taken into consideration by HCs/HCTs in the field; and CLAs management for support to education cluster activation and appropriate support for country clusters.
- Building the evidence base is critical; the GEC should play its role in engaging with CLAs and partners to encourage research and data collection linked to its mandate.
- Education Cluster support for country level advocacy should be a key priority. Areas for support include education in pooled funding mechanisms; evidence (what evidence is needed, how to collect it); shape messages appropriate to the target; share best practices; provide guidance on advocating on integration of education into other sectors; compile and share useful advocacy tools resources in one place (ECU and/or INEE); share information on global events, provide a template for country clusters to collect the most pertinent data for advocacy points; IM support to collect more robust data for advocacy purposes; a buddy system between more experienced cluster coordinators and newcomers.

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

AAP is an overarching objective of the Transformative Agenda. It entails taking account of the needs, concerns, capacities and disposition of affected parties, and explaining the meaning of, and reasons for, actions and decisions. Accountability is also the right to be heard and the duty to respond. It is a condition that must exist throughout the programme cycle. The education sector has an added value as entry point to reach out to communities, teachers, parents, students, Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs), and is in a good position to provide feedback to other sectors. With the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) as framework, entry points and quick wins for the Education Cluster in the field to strengthen AAP, could be:

- Capacity building of MoE and local partners, stakeholders at the national level, as they are the implementing partners
- Feedback loop and complaints mechanisms, using existing mechanisms (such as PTAs, SMCs)
- Enhanced transparency: communication with affected populations and harmonised programming
- Governance: cluster code of conduct/engagement
- Build the evidence for EiE: adapt the MIRA guidance and include question on what are the priorities of affected populations in inter-sector needs assessments
- Raise awareness among donors to ensure funding to be able to do AAP
- Collect good AAP practices
- Develop guidance for integrating AAP into programming and resource mobilisation

Working in Refugee Settings

The session objective was to take stock of experiences, questions, challenges, opportunities for improved coordination between the Cluster and refugee education partners. It was recognised that much of the policy frameworks will be set at a higher level beyond the remit of the Education Cluster. However the Education Cluster can support that work through the Global Clusters Coordinators Group (GCCG) and across a joint approach by all UNICEF led and co-led clusters.

The participants identified opportunities and recommendations for coordination between clusters and UNHCR in mixed settings:

- Clarify roles of UNHCR and clusters, including formal agreements between UNHCR and CLAs
- Participate in piloting the new mixed settings coordination model
- Engage the Cluster and UNHCR through sharing of information and practical plans, IM capacity of the Cluster in particular could support UNHCR/refugee response
- Document good/existing practices for coordination problem solving in mixed settings
- Strengthen relationship between UNHCR and the Cluster to support cross-border requirements, such as cross-border examinations, and preparation for repatriation
- Appoint regional level focal point/dedicated staff position on mixed settings
- Second a refugee specialist to the ECU
- Support strengthening/scale up coordination (and technical) capacity of UNHCR at field level, including dedicated coordination staff (e.g. secondment of UNICEF staff is a good practice)
- Capacity development for MoEs, and clusters on refugee education issues
- Engage with UNRWA for good practices and lessons learned on coordination

Youth

Youth are essential actors in emergency response and recovery. In time of crisis, a community's youth may be the most abundant asset, yet youth are often overlooked in the education and wider humanitarian response, with focus being placed on primary-school aged children. The session generated the following suggestions:

- Prepare an inventory of education options that should be available for youth: distance learning, vocational training, tertiary education, and an overview of existing programmes
- Make sure youth are included in SRPs, data collection and NA
- Integration with other sectors, advocate that youth are an asset and can carry back messages (such as health, WASH prevention messages) back to their communities
- Formalize better linkages between existing youth task forces (INEE Adolescents & Youth Task Team, Education Working Group on Youth, Youth and Adolescents in Emergency Advocacy Group, etc.)
- Develop a diversity marker or age marker (similar to gender marker), including ECD, primary school aged children, adolescents and youth;
- Post-2015 agenda is an opportunity to advocate for youth in emergencies
- Build the evidence base, in particular the cost of not educating youth (correlation between unemployed young people and likeliness to take part in conflict), showcase successful programmes
- Advocacy towards donors to allocate more funding to youth programmes
- Review key cluster tools and documents to make sure that youth issues are accurately captured

Early Childhood Development

Presently, 200 million children under five are not achieving their development potential due to lack of adequate nutrition, poor health, and lack of stimulating, nurturing, responsive and safe environments, often compounded by violence, abuse and neglect. Suggestions for the Education Cluster to promote greater integration and implementation of ECD are:

Global level:

- Establish an ECD marker to promote project proposals in SRP include ECD
- Create a watch list of countries scoring low on ECD indicators; advocate with clusters to address ECD
- Compile best practices on ECD as entry point for inter-sectoral interventions, e.g. CFS in food crises
- Capacity building: include ECD module in cluster coordinator training, develop online course on ECD in emergencies
- Advocacy: sharing evidence from global evaluation findings and research with cluster partners

Country level:

- Include ECD in NA (contextualization of the NA tool)
- Establish an inter-sectoral task force on ECD
- Build the capacity of cluster partners on ECD (INEE Minimum Standards, proposal writing, etc)

- Coordination with UNHCR, as many ECD interventions take place in refugee camps
- Further discussion on how to include ECD data in EMIS
- Advocacy for better integration of ECD

Gender

This session aimed to determine progress made on gender equality programming in EiE and how gender can be incorporated into the new strategic plan. Unlike in some other clusters, there is an openness and interest on gender and a clear understanding that “one size doesn’t fit all”. The Education Cluster scores relatively better than others with 65% of its projects taking gender issues into account (projects scored 2a/2b in the Gender Marker). One major challenge in taking gender (and other cross-cutting issues) into account is that the “how to” remains problematic. The participants discussed and identified entry points and quick wins to ensure gender is implemented:

- **Capacity building:** ensure all cluster coordinators complete gender E-learning, dedicate one day on gender at cluster coordination training, and further promote INEE pocket guide on gender;
- **Operational capacity:** make sure support on gender equality programming is part of the RRTs role, appointment of a gender focal point with dedicated time to fulfill this function, ensure that cluster coordinators know how their role can help ensure gender issues are discussed and incorporated in common tools and processes, discuss gender issues at cluster meetings;
- **M&E and Knowledge Management (KM):** provide guidance to IMO’s on how to conduct a Gender Analysis and how to we use the Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) and feed this into the SRP, establish feedback mechanisms from beneficiaries, capture successful approaches (complaints & feedback mechanisms, community sensitization to alleviate barriers to girls education, etc) and/or conduct an annual review to gather best practice;
- **Advocacy:** equal access to education/targeted actions for girls education core messages of global and national advocacy efforts, network with forums that try to advance gender equality

It was recommended to identify how key gender issues (GBV in school and/or on the way to school, lack of female teachers, lack WASH facilities and menstrual kits, forced recruitment, etc) can be addressed during each phase of the programme cycle and to reflect on what groups or sub groups of the affected children need prioritized attention or what problems require specific attention.

Integration with Other Sectors

The group discussed and identified inter-sectoral opportunities at country level: CFS/TLS, cash transfer and child labour (with Child Protection); food crisis (with nutrition), public health crises (Ebola) (with health and WASH). The MIRA (Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment) is also a good entry point. Does the Cluster provide other clusters with a list of questions on what they should be aware of in assessments in terms of education? There are some success stories like in Somalia where a matrix on linkages between education and WASH was produced, or the *Guidelines on the use of schools as shelters* (in Niger and Pakistan). UNICEF-led and co-led Clusters meet very regularly and discuss coordination issues, they sit in one office, and fall under one management structure. As action points , the group recommended:

- Collect good practices and lessons learned from the field
- Develop advocacy briefs/package for different sectors at the global level (using the argument "what’s in it for them") , using good practices, to show mutual benefits for all sectors
- Advocate with OCHA to ensure they encourage integration from the planning stage (MIRA, SRP, etc)

D. Participating Partners

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Finn Church Aid (FCA), Gender Standby Capacity project (GenCap), Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, National Foundation for Development and Human Rights (NFDHR), Norwegian Capacity (NORCAP), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Open Society Foundations (OSF), Plan International (Plan), Save the Children (SC), UNESCO-IIEP, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Vision International (WVI), independent consultants, Rapid Response Team (RRT) members and Education Cluster Unit (ECU).