

Global Education Cluster

Education Cluster Strategic Plan 2015 to 2019

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CCRM	<i>Cluster Coordination Reference Module</i>
CLA	<i>Cluster Lead Agency</i>
EC	<i>Education Cluster</i>
ECA	<i>Education Cluster Associates</i>
ECGP	<i>Education Cluster Global Partners</i>
ECSG	<i>Education Cluster Steering Group</i>
ECU	<i>Education Cluster Unit</i>
ECWG	<i>Education Cluster Working Group</i>
HC	<i>Humanitarian Coordinator</i>
HCT	<i>Humanitarian Country Team</i>
IASC	<i>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</i>
L3	<i>Level 3 system-wide emergency</i>
SAG	<i>Strategic Advisory Group</i>
SC	<i>Save the Children</i>
UNICEF	<i>United Nations Children’s Fund</i>

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1. Introduction and Acknowledgements

The Education Cluster derives its primary mandate, scope and boundaries from the IASC humanitarian system, and specifically from the cluster approach. Therefore, this 2015-2019 Strategic Plan is organised around core cluster coordination services. The systemization and consolidation of the cluster approach in the past two years have helped enabled this clear vision and focus in our strategic plan.

It is important to emphasize that the Education Cluster is part of the IASC humanitarian (cluster) system, as well as a mechanism within the education sector. At country and global levels it therefore acts at the intersection of the two systems, each with different aims, approaches, actors and partnerships.

The Education Cluster aims to ensure a timely, effective and coordinated *education* response in humanitarian crises. This means that the strategic and operational choices the Education Cluster will make in selecting and prioritizing the range and volume of products it will deliver against this plan take the particular dynamics, opportunities and challenges of the education sector into account.

At a macro-level, with 28.5 million out-of-school children living in conflict-affected countries and millions more affected by displacement, natural disasters, the provision of education in emergencies is fundamental to achieving Education for All. As coordinator of education actors at country and global level, the Education Cluster has an important role in facilitating the practical realization of global education goals in humanitarian situations.

A reality and key challenge confronting the sector is consistent underfunding of education in emergencies, at less than 2% of humanitarian funding. Not only does education receive a small share overall, but it receives the smallest proportion of the requested amount of all humanitarian sectors. As the main forum through which education partners access humanitarian funding, the Education Cluster at country and global level has an important role to advocate for recognition and adequate resourcing of education in emergencies.

In terms of education-specific partnerships, the Education Cluster participates in the *Education Cannot Wait* advocacy initiative, linked to *Education First* and convened by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The cluster also works closely with INEE on sharing standards, technical resources, and guidance. The Education Cluster is also liaising with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and other key actors on bridging humanitarian and development coordination and financing. Through connections with these and other agencies, partnerships and networks, the cluster provides advice and information from the cluster perspective to prioritize education in emergencies going forward.

Positively, this Strategic Plan starts at a time of several promising developments and opportunities. Key development and humanitarian partnerships, agencies, organisations, donors, advocates and other actors are exploring new options and ways of working to address education in emergencies, protracted crises, and recovery situations more holistically and comprehensively. This includes consideration of measures to bridge the humanitarian and development divide, in terms of planning,

coordination and financing. The Education Cluster will engage in these efforts to help ensure education systems keep going and children learning during humanitarian crises.

Methodology:

The 2015 -2019 Education Cluster Strategic Plan was developed through an extensive consultative process undertaken in the course of 2014 with a wide range of stakeholders; field based Education Cluster coordination staff and members, members of the global Education Cluster Working Group, global Education Cluster Unit staff and Rapid Response Team members, representatives from the humanitarian coordination system, technical support agencies, education focused but non-cluster member organisations, staff from other clusters, and donors.

A briefing note capturing reflections on the implementation of the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan was prepared based on an on-line survey and key informant interviews to identify lessons learnt, issues to be addressed and considerations to be taken into account in the construction of the new plan. Key moments in the planning process were a four-day strategic planning meeting with global members and field-based coordinators in September 2014 (Istanbul), and a smaller follow-up meeting with the strategic planning Reference Group to reach agreement on the Strategic Plan document in November 2014 (Geneva).

Acknowledgements:

The Education Cluster Unit (ECU) would like to thank the many individuals at country, regional and global level who participated in the various consultations for their valuable insights. Special thanks are due to the strategic planning Reference Group, made up of the Education Cluster's Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) and representatives of several other global members, the Rapid Response Team and Steering Group, for providing guidance throughout the planning process. Finally, and with great appreciation, the ECU would like to acknowledge Avenir Analytics, whose consultants provided expert professional expertise in operationalizing and guiding the consultation process, culminating in this 2015-2019 Strategic Plan document.

2. Purpose of the Strategic Plan; why it is needed, and what it contains

This strategic plan is the main reference that will guide the EC's activities during the period 2015 to 2020. Its principal purpose is to provide primary direction in support of the generation of the EC's annual work plans.

The Education Cluster (EC) has developed a high degree of operational effectiveness since its inception; *the ability to do things right*¹. This competence will remain important going forward. To increase the relevance of its work in the future the EC will ensure it offers mission critical services and products² that support and compliment, but do not duplicate, those provided by other organizations working to deliver developmental and humanitarian education assistance; *making sure it is doing the right things*.

The guidance contained in the strategic plan is made up of 5 main components:

- The **mission statement**; the principle role and responsibility of the EC as a part of the international humanitarian assistance mechanism.
- The **values statement**; the guiding principles used to define the EC's work.
- The **vision statement**; what the EC will do.
- The **operational delivery**; how the EC will carry out its work and the role and responsibilities of the main actors involved.
- The **goals and objectives**; how the EC will measure the impact of the strategic approach.

3. Mission Statement; The Education Cluster role and responsibility

The stated aim of the IASC cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and coordination of technical capacity to respond predictably to humanitarian emergencies, and provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response. The EC is a part of this system.

The principle role of the EC is to prepare and then deploy resources in support of national education coordination mechanisms, when called upon by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), as part of an overall international emergency response.

The principle responsibility of the EC is to ensure education agencies and organisations responding to an emergency have the opportunity to take a coordinated approach and work alongside existing education structures at country level, to meet the education needs of the affected population. This approach ensures the international response will be appropriate, reliable and efficient.

¹ Internal Briefing Note; Reflections on the Implementation of the Global Education Cluster Strategic Plan 2011-2014, prepared on behalf of the global Education Cluster Unit by Avenir Analytics, 3 September 2014

² The categories used to define the work of the EC in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan are 'services' and 'products'. A 'product' refers to a specific and tangible input the global EC will provide in support of a field EC. A 'service' describes the parameters for a group of products, usually associated with a phase of the 'prepare, respond, transition' cycle of cluster work.

4. Values Statement; *The guiding principles used to define Education Clusters' work*

The values statement identifies the functions the EC is required to fulfil, as well as the principles used to select the coordination services and products to fulfil those functions. This information will be used to guide the development of annual work plans.

The mission statement notes that the main work of the EC is to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of humanitarian assistance at country level. This is broken down into 6 main functions the EC has to fulfil, described in the IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module (CCRM)³. They are:

- To support [education] service delivery
- To inform the HC/HCT's decision making [for issues related to education]
- To plan and develop [education sector] strategy
- To monitor and evaluate [education sector] performance
- To build national capacity in [education] preparedness and contingency planning
- Advocacy [on education issues]

Guidance for determining the coordination services and products the EC will need to carry out is taken from outputs of research carried out on the implementation of the EC's Strategic Plan 2011-2014⁴. The three main principles are:

- **Service and product selection:** the EC will concentrate on providing a broad range of mission critical coordination services. Each service comprises a limited number of specialised products, for use by multiple agencies involved in the delivery of education assistance, as part of an international humanitarian emergency response mechanism.
- **Trade-offs:** the EC will focus on those coordination services and products that improve the harmonisation, and therefore the impact, of responding agencies' activities at country level. The EC will also connect education partners with the source or contact from which they can find technical inputs required for delivering education programs. The EC will not be the primary provider of these resources.
- **Creating fit:** the EC will adjust the coordination services and products it provides based on the context, however they will all remain part of the overarching system designed so that each mutually reinforces the other. Where possible the EC will assist responding agencies to identify sources that can provide any highly customized or discrete products they may require, but again the EC will not be the primary provider of these resources.

³ More detail can be found in 'Cluster Reference Module FINAL - master copy. July 2014, Section 4, Page 10 - Cluster Functions'

⁴ Reflections on the Implementation of the Global Education Cluster Strategic Plan, 2011-2014. Internal Briefing Note. October 2014.

5. Vision Statement; *What the Education Cluster will do*

The EC will provide three core services in the coordination of education service delivery. These are described below:

Coordination Services for Education Cluster Readiness (1)

The EC will support national actors and coordination mechanisms in selected priority countries to develop the understanding and capacity to help inform when the cluster should be activated, and how the products available will support coordination of education resources in response to an emergency. It will also help plan how these products are integrated with ongoing education development initiatives.

Coordination Services for Activated Education Clusters (2)

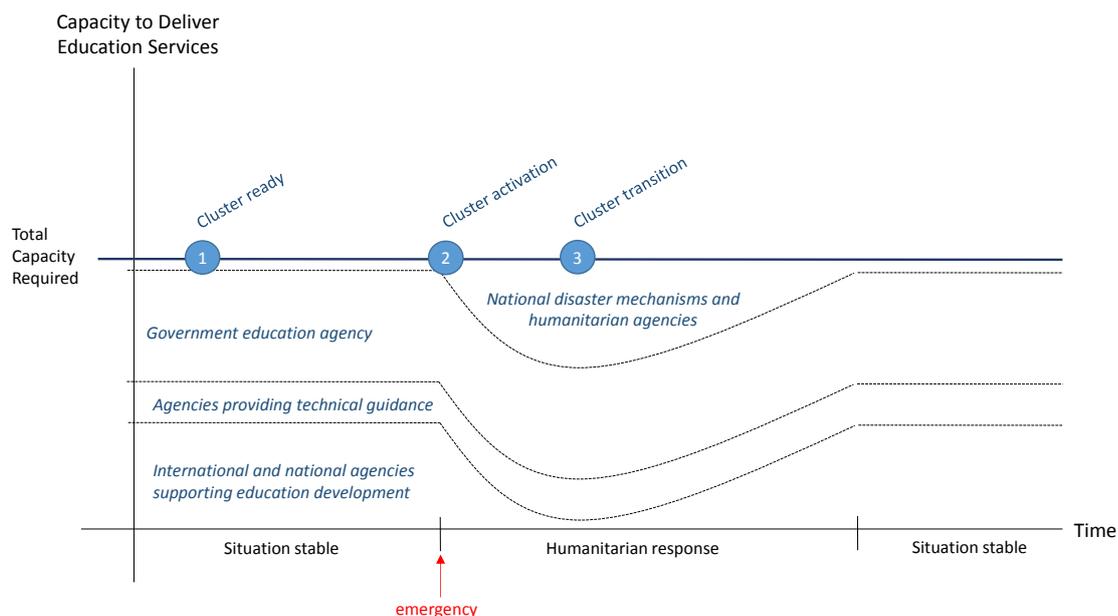
When the cluster system is activated in an emergency, the EC will have a systematic process in place by which it identifies and deploys products appropriate to support coordination of education response activities. The level of engagement (product type) and support will be dependent on the type of cluster⁵ and severity of the emergency, the capacity of the standing resources and the level of preparedness. The EC will also lead on the development, revision and maintenance of these products to ensure their relevance and appropriateness in supporting activated clusters to fulfil their functions as outlined in IASC guidance.

Coordination Services for Education Cluster Transition and De-Activation (3)

The EC will have a systematic process in place by which it reviews the relevance and impact of its support. The EC will use this information to identify when to transition its work to the standing national coordination mechanism and then deactivate its products.

The indicative position of these three services in any national plan is shown in the diagram below.

Orientation of Education Cluster Services in a National Context



⁵ Types will include (i) L3, (ii) early warning, early action, (iii) long term, formally activated by the HC

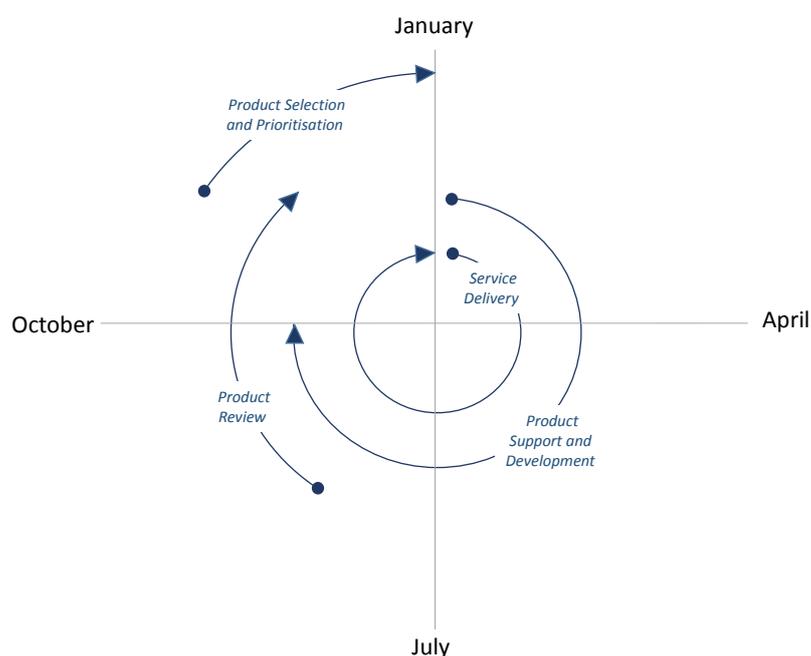
6. Operational Delivery; How the Education Cluster will work

To ensure the EC remains relevant over the next 5 years its work will be planned, implemented and reviewed using an annual planning mechanism. The annual work plan will be based on product delivery at three levels:

1. Direct support to the provision of the three key coordination services at the country level.
2. Strengthening frameworks and capacity for the three key coordination services through capacity building, development of tools, procedures and guidance, and promotion of their use.
3. Global engagement with the wider humanitarian and education sectors to ensure an enabling environment for the three key coordination services at country level.

A detailed work plan and budget for 2015, and a broader plan and budget for 2016 has been prepared⁶. Toward the end of 2015 the work of the EC will be reviewed, future requirements confirmed, and the 2016 work plan and budget adjusted and finalized. In addition a broad plan and budget for 2017 will be constructed. This cycle will be repeated annually until 2020.

The method that will be used to prepare and implement the annual work plans has 4 distinct components, shown in the diagram opposite. These, along with the organization structure that will be used to carry out the work, are described below.



Product Review

Starting in quarter 3 of each year the EC will review 3 elements for each of the services it is providing:

- How effective the products it is providing have been in meeting the EC objectives.
- Looking at the future, are there any gaps in the products it provides.
- Looking at the future, are there any products that should be discontinued.

Information to carry out the review will come from current product delivery activities (see section 5) and an update of the general operating environment.

Product Selection and Prioritisation

Based on the review, the optimal range and volume of products that will be delivered by the EC for each service will be identified⁷. The work to be carried out on any new products, work required to amend products, or those to be decommissioned will also be included. This will form the basis of the annual work plan, which will then be adjusted and activities prioritized in-line with the likely resources and funding that will be available. The work plan will be drafted in quarter 4 of each year.

⁶ Education Cluster Work Plan 2015 – 2016.

⁷ Based on the amount of forecast cluster work by type; L3, early warning, early action, long term, formally activated etc.

Product Support and Development

With the annual work plan and budget agreed, the EC will organize its resources to ensure (i) that the products it has committed to make available are ready for use and are accessible, (ii) those products it has agreed to amend are changed accordingly, and (iii) that the development of new products it has agreed to add is carried out⁸. This activity will be carried out in quarter 1, 2 and 3 of every year.

Education Cluster Management Structure

The overall structure the EC will use to carry out activities and ensure operational delivery is depicted in the diagram opposite, along with a description of the role and responsibilities for each of the main actors.

Education Cluster Steering Group (ECSG)

The ECSG is made up from 2 representatives from each of UNICEF and SC⁹ and the two Global Cluster Coordinators. The group has 3 main responsibilities:

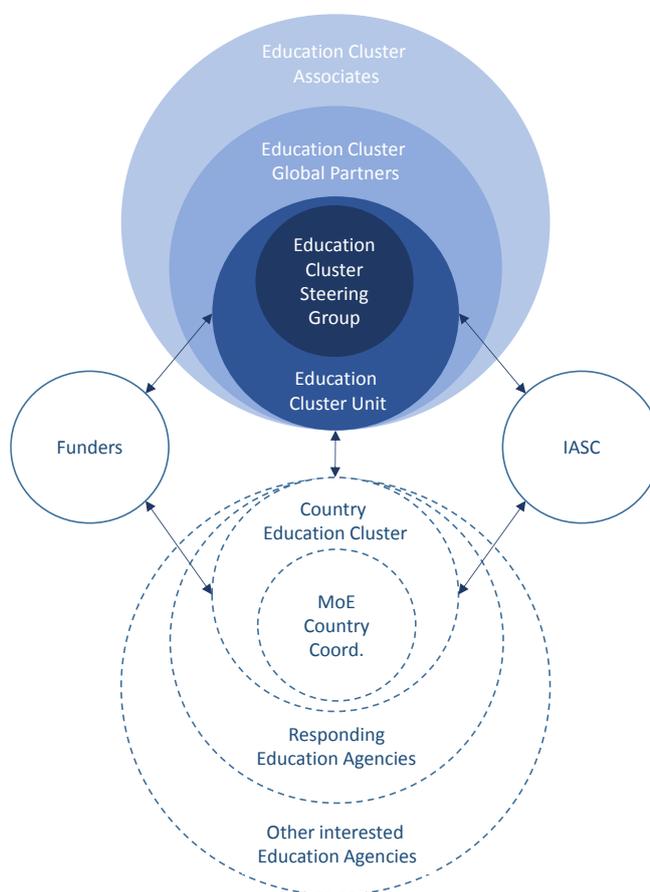
- To have oversight on the annual plan and budget by monitoring progress on a quarterly basis.
- To actively support the work of the ECU by ensuring the engagement of the respective CLAs and securing funding for core activities and resources.
- To ensure the day to day working relationship of the CLAs.

Education Cluster Unit (ECU)

The ECU is led by a core standing team provided by the CLAs. This team is augmented by staff seconded from the ECGP. The number and profile of these staff will be dependent on the activities agreed in the annual plan and budget. The 8 main responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that the country coordination mechanisms have access and support for the coordination services and products the EC has specified it will provide, at the point they are required, and that these are relevant and updated.
- Ensure that the global support service is in place to support the country coordination mechanisms and to represent the views and concerns of the EC at appropriate fora and events.
- Work with funding agencies at a global level to ensure education coordination funding requirements are known, and that this information results in country level resourcing.
- Working with the ECGP, to lead the process to produce the annual work plan and budget, to select the type and volume of products that will be delivered the following year. This will be based on information the ECU provides from the product review, and adjusted and prioritised against likely available resources in an annual planning meeting.

Education Cluster Operating Structure



⁸ Product enhancement or development may be spread across more than one year.

⁹ Providing direction and support is a responsibility of the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLA's). This will typically be one Senior Education in Emergencies Specialist and one Humanitarian Specialist.

- Agree and manage resources committed by the ECGP. Progress updates will be provided in a quarterly update and a half yearly progress report that includes a verbal briefing.
- Brief the ESG on the annual plan and budget and ensure this is approved, and that the ESG is updated on progress and constraints on a quarterly basis.
- Ensure that Education Cluster Associates (ECA) are briefed on what the EC has promised to deliver, how it works, and its progress to date through the issuance of a quarterly update, communications products and through a yearly consultation event.
- To help resolve issues raised by ECGP to the ECSG, CLAs or in-country coordination staff.

Education Cluster Global Partners (ECGP)

The ECGP is made up of representatives of humanitarian agencies involved in the delivery of emergency education services or support of education in emergencies technical policies and guidance. This group has 3 main responsibilities:

- Work with the ECU to produce and agree on the annual work plan and budget, to select the type and volume of products that will be delivered the following year. This will be based on information the ECU provides from the product review, and adjusted and prioritised against likely available resources in an annual planning meeting.
- Be ready to commit significant dedicated resources to the implementation of the EC work plan. These resources may be required in the form of staff, products or funding.
- Ensure that the agency represented is part of the EC country coordination mechanism for activities covered by EC services in any country where the agency is present.

Education Cluster Associates (ECA)

The ECA is made up of agencies that support the delivery of education services or associated activities at a country level, either directly or indirectly. They are classed as associates either because the work of the EC has mostly indirect influence on the core activities of the agency, or the agency wishes to take into account what the EC does but not work directly with the cluster coordination mechanism. This group of members is responsible to ensure they are briefed on what the EC has promised to deliver, how it works, and its progress to date by accessing the EC's quarterly update, communications products and an annual EC consultation.

7. Goals and Objectives; How the Education Cluster will measure the impact of its strategy

The EC will use a measurement framework that allows it to gauge the impact of its strategic plan, and therefore how well it is carrying out its role and responsibilities. This will facilitate communication on progress to the main actors as well as helping to assess the strengths and weaknesses of its work, and identify areas requiring attention.

The measurement framework has two parts. The first is a set of operational objectives based on the CCRM core cluster functions. The second is a set of strategic goals using an adapted balance scorecard approach¹⁰. The framework concept is shown opposite.

Whilst the components of the operational objectives and the strategic goals are identified in this strategic plan¹¹, the specific targets will be set during the annual work planning exercise to ensure they remain relevant to the activities. Three measurements will be made against each component; what was the planned target, what was the actual requirement and what was delivered.

Operational measurements will be made by the country education clusters at the end of a cluster activation or in quarter 4 of each year, whichever is sooner, and sent to the ECU for analysis¹².

The measurements will show what was achieved against what was needed, and variance against plan. Areas of under-performance can then be identified.

Strategic measurements will be made and analysed by the ECU in quarter 4 of each year. The measurements will again show what was achieved against what was needed, and variance against plan. Areas of under-delivery can then be identified. By cross-referencing the achievements identified in the operational and strategic measurements the total impact of the EC can be described. Conversely, under-performance of operational objectives can be matched with under-delivery of strategic goals, allowing the ECU to identify the root cause and the corrective action for any improvement required. These will be incorporated into the following year plan either by means of a simple planning adjustment, re-alignment of a product, creation of a new product, or some change in the way of working within the IASC system. In any case the ECU is responsible to ensure the appropriate action is taken.

Education Cluster Measurement Framework



¹⁰ 'Linking the Balanced Scorecard to Strategy', Robert S. Kaplan, David P. Norton, *California Management Review*, Vol.39 No.1 Fall 2007.

¹¹ Set out in Education Cluster Work Plan 2015 - 2016

¹² The IASC is currently finalizing a cluster measurement system, and there already are a number of reporting requirements outlined in the CCRM. Notwithstanding these, it is good practice for the EC to have a dedicated measurement system. That said, the information should be derived as a component of the IASC required reporting and not in addition. This planned EC measurement system may need to be adjusted when the IASC measurement system is finalized, depending on the final content.