



# 2009-2011 CLUSTER REVIEW REPORT

United Nations Programme Coordination Group on  
Natural Disasters and Emergencies



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## Acronyms

A&T	Alive & Trive
CC	Climate Change
DMU	Disaster Management Unit
DMWG	Disaster Management Working Group
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMMA	Emergency Market Mapping & Analysis
ENA	Emergency Nutrition Assessment
ER	Early Recovery
ERN	Early Recovery Network
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FHI	Family Health International
GoV	Government of Viet Nam
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HSPH	Hanoi School of Public Health
HTP	Harmonised Training Package
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMAM	Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition
INEE	Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies
IRD	Institute for Research and Development (France)
LCA	Logistics Capacity Assessment
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MoH	Ministry of Health
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NDMP	Natural Disasters Mitigation Partnership
NCERWASS	National Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
NCPG	Nutrition Cluster and Partnership Group
NIN	National Institute of Nutrition
PCG NDE	Programme Coordination Group Natural Disasters and Emergencies
RC	Resident Coordinator
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition
SP	Samaritan Purse
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

## Foreword

Viet Nam, as a country prone to multiple hazards, has a wealth of experience in dealing with disasters. It has built up this experience through concerted efforts from the Government of Viet Nam, the United Nations, mass organisations, non-government agencies and the Vietnamese people themselves.

Over the past decade, the Government has made remarkable progress in improving disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The country is undertaking progressive legislative, strategic and institutional reform to adapt to emerging challenges, including climate change, rapid socio-economic development and urbanization.

For over thirty years, the United Nations has been supporting the Government through disaster relief and recovery, training and capacity building, the introduction of disaster response standards, community-based disaster risk management support, research and policy advice.

In 2009, to enhance coordination in disaster preparedness, response and recovery - especially in the case of major or consecutive disasters - the United Nations, together with its humanitarian partners have introduced the Cluster Approach. Since their establishment, the clusters have contributed to improved assessment tools, streamlined sector-specific information sharing and coordination, aided the capacity building of Government and non-Government partners, and helped to shape policy and strategy development.

I am very pleased to present this 2009-2011 Cluster Review Report, capturing the experiences and challenges of the cluster system in Viet Nam over these years and offering valuable lessons learned and recommendations. It represents our dedication to the continuous improvement of the humanitarian architecture in Viet Nam through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership.



Ms. Pratibha Mehta  
**Resident Coordinator,**  
**United Nations Viet Nam**

# Introduction

Internationally, the cluster approach has become the standard for coordination in major disasters and has been utilized in other Asian countries including Indonesia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Laos<sup>1</sup>. It has been endorsed and institutionalized by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a global inter-agency forum made up of UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.

In November 2008, on behalf of the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG), the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership (NDMP) and the UN PCG NDE prepared a study on the applicability of the cluster approach in Viet Nam<sup>2</sup>. The study concluded that application of the cluster approach in Viet Nam will be both necessary and appropriate in the event of a major disaster and less in the case of small to medium scale recurrent disasters. It was noted that it is essential that the cluster approach be customized to suit the Vietnamese context. Successful application of the cluster approach would require detailed preparation, coordination and commitment from all humanitarian actors.

Based on the recommendations from the Applicability Study, various UN agencies took the lead in the development of terms of references for the different clusters<sup>3</sup> with close consultation with NGO and Government partners. In September 2009, a *'High Level Meeting for Strengthening Clusters and Information Management in Response to Disasters in Vietnam'* was organized to improve the knowledge of Government, UN and non-UN partners on cluster management and information management for disaster response and to support Government engagement as a leading actor in the cluster approach.

Since the Ketsana and Mirinae disasters in 2009, a number of clusters have been activated unofficially in Viet Nam and have since been functioning under different operational modalities, from cluster to coordination group, from partnership group to network. Clusters have contributed to improved assessment tools, enhanced sector specific information sharing and coordination, capacity building of Government and non-Government partners, and policy and strategy development.

The cluster approach in Viet Nam has been under continuous review and discussion in order to improve the system and better address the needs and challenges in disaster preparedness and response operations in the country. In June 2010, an internal cluster review has been undertaken that was repeated in October 2011. This Cluster Review Report aims to summarize the main findings of these reviews and formulate clear recommendations for improvement of the cluster approach in Viet Nam. It provides an overview of cluster specific achievements, challenges and lessons learnt, besides discussing potential new clusters and formulating clear recommendations for the overall cluster approach in Viet Nam.

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<sup>1</sup>Cluster Approach implementation by country:

<http://oneresponse.info/Coordination/ClusterApproach/Pages/Cluster%20Approach.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Cluster Leadership Approach Applicability Study: Viet Nam. Final Report, November 2008. Prepared on behalf of the DMWG, by the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership and UN PCG NDE:

<http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=457>

<sup>3</sup>See section 'Additional information on the cluster approach'.

## A. Early Recovery Network (ERN)

Chair:	UNDP
Government counterpart:	Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
Members:	UN and NGO focal points to be selected from each cluster
First cluster meeting:	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
Meeting frequency:	As required
Main contact person:	Ian Wilderspin, DRM Technical Advisor, UNDP, <a href="mailto:ian.wilderspin@undp.org">ian.wilderspin@undp.org</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruitment of Early Recovery Consultant</li> <li>▪ Training and orientation on Emergency Market Mapping &amp; Analysis (EMMA)</li> <li>▪ EMMA refresher training</li> <li>▪ Support to development of Government Guidelines on Emergency Response and Early Recovery</li> <li>▪ Information sharing on ER</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1st EMMA mission in North-Central Viet Nam: report developed and findings disseminated (2010)</li> <li>▪ ERNworkshop</li> <li>▪ Support to GoV relief support matrix</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited knowledge about the meaning and importance of ER among stakeholders, especially GoV counterpart</li> <li>▪ Operationalization of ER cluster/ERN in Viet Nam</li> <li>▪ Short-term commitment of members towards clusters versus long-term commitment to ER in the aftermath of a disaster</li> <li>▪ Peak of information sharing and coordination in the aftermath of a disasters, but less during recovery phase</li> <li>▪ Time, human resources and expertise for ER within UNDP variable</li> <li>▪ Limited link with global ER cluster or ER clusters in other countries</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A network of cluster focal points rather than a separate cluster better addresses ER issues</li> <li>▪ As it encompasses various sectors, ER needs to be mainstreamed in the other clusters</li> <li>▪ Sufficient and dedicated human resources within UNDP on ER are crucial for a proper operation of the ERN</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity building within UNDP on ER issues</li> <li>▪ Capacity building of ERN members from various clusters and GoV, mainly MARD, on ER</li> <li>▪ Training on EMMA and support to EMMA mission if required</li> <li>▪ Further dissemination of GoV Emergency Response and Early Recovery Guidelines and deliverables from Early Recovery Consultant</li> <li>▪ Information sharing on ER</li> </ul>

## B. Education in Emergencies (EiE) Coordination Group

Chair:	UNICEF and Save the Children
Government counterpart:	Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), Student Affairs Department
Members:	ADRA, American Red Cross, CARE, German Red Cross, Handicap, IFRC, JICA, PDC, Plan International, UNDP, UNESCO, World Vision
First cluster meeting:	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
Meeting frequency:	As required
Main contact person:	Mitsue Uemura, Chief of Education Section, UNICEF, <a href="mailto:muemura@unicef.org">muemura@unicef.org</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual capacity mapping 4W ‘who, what, where and when’</li> <li>▪ Support to development of MoET Action Plan on Natural Disaster Prevention, Control and Mitigation, and inclusion of EiE in 2011-2016 Education Strategy</li> <li>▪ Support to development of MoET education needs assessment tools and MoET frontline responders’ training materials</li> <li>▪ Training for education managers at national and sub-national level and EiE member organisations</li> <li>▪ Cluster coordinator’s training with MoET and EiE members participation</li> <li>▪ Advocacy event on EiE and INEE standards</li> <li>▪ MoU between MoET, UNICEF and Save the Children</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Application of standard education emergency supply list</li> <li>▪ EiE coordination group meetings</li> <li>▪ Sharing of EiE cluster member response plans</li> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> Education Needs Assessment in North-Central Vietnam (2010)</li> <li>▪ EiE Lessons Learnt study on 2009 experiences</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobilizing resources, time and commitment from main partners</li> <li>▪ Mechanism for coordination between different departments in MoET involved in DRM unclear</li> <li>▪ Unclear linkage between disaster response efforts by MoET and by CFSC at sub-national level in disaster affected areas</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Important to recognise and built on past experiences and efforts</li> <li>▪ Awareness raising and advocacy on EiE should also target partners outside the education sector</li> <li>▪ Joint activities under the EiE mechanism have proven to be effective for advocacy</li> <li>▪ Clearly defined roles and tasks during emergencies amongst main players is a condition for efficient operations</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support to MoET for improved coordination through EiE group</li> <li>▪ Finalization of jointly developed tools on assessment, capacity building, training, etc.</li> <li>▪ Identification of areas for more joint work</li> <li>▪ Advocacy for better integration of EiE in broader DRM and CC agenda</li> </ul>

## C. Food Security Cluster<sup>4</sup>

Chair:	FAO
Government counterpart:	Tbc
Members:	CARE, JICA, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, UNDP, World Vision
First cluster meeting:	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
Meeting frequency:	As required
Main contact person:	Heini Utunen, Programme Officer, FAO, <a href="mailto:Heini.Utunen@fao.org">Heini.Utunen@fao.org</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Basic Emergency Food Security &amp; Livelihood Training for cluster members and partners</li> <li>▪ Development of reporting format for livelihood operations</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Livelihoods – Agriculture assessment in T.T.Hue (2009)</li> <li>▪ Information sharing on livelihood recovery initiatives</li> <li>▪ Advocacy and awareness raising with UNDP on silent hazards like drought</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Livelihoods cluster has been inactive in Viet Nam since end-2010</li> <li>▪ Operationalization of livelihoods and food security cluster in Vietnam</li> <li>▪ Limited time and human resources on food security within FAO</li> <li>▪ Expertise on food security located in regional office FAO</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crucial to have a jointly developed clear terms of reference based on identified needs in the country and added value as a cluster</li> <li>▪ As the Nutrition cluster is operating well and both sectors are very related, the Food Security cluster could be a subgroup under the Nutrition cluster</li> <li>▪ Based on informal and formal discussions, the need exists for a discussion and sharing forum on food security and livelihoods</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Based on an in-country consultation, further operationalize the Food Security cluster, likely as subgroup under the Nutrition cluster</li> <li>▪ Identify Government counterpart for cluster</li> <li>▪ Awareness raising on new Food Security cluster among main partners</li> <li>▪ Capacity building within FAO on food security</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup>Initially this cluster was named the Livelihoods cluster, but due to restructuring of the global cluster in 2011, it was changed into the Food Security Cluster.



## D. Health Cluster

Chair:	WHO
Government counterpart:	Ministry of Health (MoH), Disaster Management Unit (DMU)
Members:	Hanoi School of Public Health, Save the Children, UNFPA, UNICEF
First cluster meeting:	October 2009
Meeting frequency:	As required
Main contact person:	Dr. Vu Quang Hieu, Emergency and Humanitarian Action, WHO, <a href="mailto:vuh@wpro.who.int">vuh@wpro.who.int</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health cluster preparedness meetings</li> <li>▪ Information sharing on regional and global health cluster initiatives</li> <li>▪ Development of Joint Rapid Health Assessment and other tools and guidelines, with annual revision</li> <li>▪ Support to development of National Action Plan on Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery of the health sector</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Matrix of health relief activities of members</li> <li>▪ Comprehensive survey on storm impact on health facilities (2009)</li> <li>▪ Rapid health assessment in Mekong Delta (2011)</li> <li>▪ Emergency health cluster meetings</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High staff turn-over within MoH, particularly with cluster focal points</li> <li>▪ DMU within MoH usually junior staff without influence on decision-making or large involvement in response activities</li> <li>▪ MoH does not provide clear instructions for staff involved in health cluster activities</li> <li>▪ Unsystematic sharing of information among partners</li> <li>▪ Continuous operation of the cluster, also without major disaster, in contrast to IASC guidelines</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regular meetings keep the momentum besides information sharing</li> <li>▪ Members should better familiarize themselves with the Terms of Reference in order to contribute more effectively</li> <li>▪ Monitoring and evaluation of health interventions after a disaster is crucial for learning and coordination</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocacy and awareness raising on health cluster within MoH and among partners</li> <li>▪ Develop a health cluster contingency plan that can be activated when needed</li> <li>▪ Organization of 1 to 2 cluster preparedness meetings</li> </ul>

## E. Nutrition Cluster and Partnership Group (NCPG)

Chair:	UNICEF
Government counterpart:	National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)
Members:	ADRA, A&T/FHI, CDC, CIAI, FAO, Health Bridge, IRD, Oxfam, PATH, Plan International, Save the Children, SP, UNDP, UNWOMEN, USAID, WFP RO, WHO, World Vision
First cluster meeting:	16 October 2009
Meeting frequency:	Monthly
Main contact person:	Roger Mathisen, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, <a href="mailto:rmathisen@unicef.org">rmathisen@unicef.org</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Institutionalization of NCPG as working group under Health Partnership Group</li> <li>▪ Monthly NCPG meetings</li> <li>▪ National Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) Guidelines and Operational Plan drafted and ToT conducted</li> <li>▪ Global HTP for Nutrition in Emergencies adapted to Viet Nam and training conducted for national level and 9 provinces</li> <li>▪ SMART Training conducted and roll out of ENA software</li> <li>▪ Regional cluster coordinator training</li> <li>▪ Mapping of nutrition projects by agency and geographical location</li> <li>▪ Emergency nutrition interventions included in the final 2011-2020 National Nutrition Strategy</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regular emergency NCPG meetings besides monthly meeting</li> <li>▪ Sector Specific Rapid Assessments, conducted by GoV counterpart, with support of UNICEF (2009, 2010 and 2011)</li> <li>▪ Consensus on essential package of appropriate maternal, infant and young child nutrition interventions during various phases and levels of emergencies</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issues related to general food assistance, cash transfer programmes and livelihoods needs to be covered by the NCPG due to inactive food security cluster</li> <li>▪ Timeliness of data collection and disseminating assessment results</li> <li>▪ Implementation of assessment recommended actions</li> <li>▪ NCPG operational at national level, not at provincial/regional level</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good participation in NCPG meetings indicate that the cluster fills a gap in terms of coordination and information sharing</li> <li>▪ NIN hosting and providing the venue for meetings enables follow up of the agreed action points, even during the meeting period as additional national focal points are made available on short notice</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce cluster at sub-national level in selected focus districts</li> <li>▪ Follow-up on the findings of the sector specific rapid assessments</li> <li>▪ Simplify assessment methodology and monitor application of capacity development for more timely and effective response</li> <li>▪ Provincial roll out of HTP, SMART and ENA software</li> <li>▪ Scale up IMAM with focus on provinces with high malnutrition rates and prone to disasters</li> </ul>

## F. WASH Cluster

Chair:	UNICEF
Government counterpart:	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), National Center for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (NCERWASS)
Members:	ADB, CARE, IFRC, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, SNV, UNDP, WHO, World Vision
First cluster meeting:	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
Meeting frequency:	Every two months
Main contact person:	Nguyen Thanh Hien, WES Specialist, UNICEF, <a href="mailto:nthien@unicef.org">nthien@unicef.org</a>

Main disaster preparedness activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bi-monthly cluster meetings</li> <li>▪ Training course on WASH in emergencies and WASH cluster for national and provincial partners</li> <li>▪ Build awareness and agreement of partners on application of SPHERE standards</li> <li>▪ Advocate and support contingency planning based on worst case scenario</li> <li>▪ Draft Terms of Reference for study on climate change and its impact on WASH situation for women and children</li> </ul>
Main disaster response and recovery activities undertaken since cluster has been initiated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emergency WASH cluster meetings</li> <li>▪ WASH cluster matrix for mapping of sector specific response</li> <li>▪ Information sharing on WASH support initiatives</li> </ul>
Cluster specific challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited participation of GoV counterpart in WASH cluster meetings</li> <li>▪ Lack of coordination between GoV ministries and agencies in requesting for supplies for emergency response</li> <li>▪ Absence of sub-national cluster mechanisms limits coordination in the provinces or districts where actual WASH support takes place</li> </ul>
Cluster specific lessons learnt:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cluster approach provided important forum for agreement on harmonization of standards and targeting strategy</li> <li>▪ Through the cluster joint capacity building initiatives on disaster preparedness and response can be carried out</li> </ul>
Way forward for 2012:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reinforce the role of MARD in the WASH cluster</li> <li>▪ Advocacy for a more holistic approach to emergency response with integration with other clusters and inclusion of early recovery components</li> <li>▪ Training courses for local partners on WASH in emergencies and climate change</li> <li>▪ Continue advocating MARD to invest in good preparedness and pre-positions of supplies for emergencies</li> <li>▪ Carry out sector specific rapid assessment whenever necessary</li> <li>▪ Conduct study on climate change and its impact on WASH situation for women and children</li> </ul>

## G. Other clusters

### Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)

Chair:	UNICEF
Government counterpart:	Tbc
Main contact person:	Vo Khanh Nam , Senior ICT Assistant, UNICEF, <a href="mailto:vknam@unicef.org">vknam@unicef.org</a>

Discussions on the ETC have been initiated during the monthly UN PGG NDE meeting in February 2011. At a global level, there were changes in the leadership of the three components of the ETC: logistics, security communication and data communication, networks and internet access. As UNICEF was designated as the new global lead on data communication, they took the initiative to discuss the necessity and possibility of an ETC in Viet Nam. It was concluded that ETC could potentially be useful during rapid assessments for example on the development of a telecommunications kit for assessment teams. Further discussions with partners on the ETC are planned for 2012.

### Logistics Cluster

Chair:	WHO
Government counterpart:	Tbc
Main contact person:	Sylvain Denarie, Programme and Administrative Officer, WHO, <a href="mailto:denaries@wpro.who.int">denaries@wpro.who.int</a> (until end of January 2012)

Discussions on the Logistics Cluster were first initiated during the monthly UN PCG NDE meeting in April 2011. The meeting identified a number of challenges in logistics during emergency response in Viet Nam, especially for major disasters, like civil-military cooperation, limited UN experience in the absence of WFP (global cluster lead), follow-up to Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA), etc. During the DMWG preparedness training in August 2011, further discussions took place with the main INGO and Red Cross partners. As a result, on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011, a follow-up meeting took place attended by WHO, IFRC, PACCOM and CARE with the main objective to assess the opportunity to set up a working group for logistic coordination in disaster preparedness and to discuss the major challenges in Viet Nam like the process for facilitating “Entry of relief supplies in the country and Fast track procedures”. The current plan is to conduct specific workshops or meetings to further raise attention to the issue.

### Shelter Cluster

Chair:	UN Habitat and IFRC
Government counterpart:	Tbc
Main contact person:	Pascal Bourcher, Programme Coordinator Safety and Resilience IFRC, <a href="mailto:pascal.bourcher@ifrc.org">pascal.bourcher@ifrc.org</a> Do Minh Huyen, Programme Officer, UN Habitat, <a href="mailto:huyen.do@unhabitatvietnam.org">huyen.do@unhabitatvietnam.org</a>

In the beginning of October 2011, IFRC approached the secretariat of the UN PCG NDE to start discussions on the need for better information sharing and coordination in emergency shelter through the shelter cluster. Focussed discussions between UN Habitat and IFRC, who are tasked with this at the global level, are planned for the coming months.

## Overall challenges

- Involvement and commitment of main Government counterparts as well as staff from other ministries and relevant institutions.
- Initially, limited awareness on the cluster approach in general and of global cluster experiences amongst stakeholders in Viet Nam.
- In terms of capacity, knowledge and human resources, UN, NGOs and other partners were insufficiently prepared to introduce the cluster approach in Viet Nam. Therefore, a 'learning-by-doing' approach was adopted. Still, expertise within the UN and partners in Viet Nam on the cluster approach remains limited.
- Sustaining interest and active participation of cluster members.
- Addressing different expectations and demands from members.
- High meeting frequency without sufficient coordination between clusters stretches staff and resources of members, especially during emergencies.
- Perceived inter-cluster 'competition' during disaster response with limited prioritization of cluster activities versus the actual needs
- Potential overlap in terms of tasks, roles and responsibilities with other existing coordination mechanisms, notably the Disaster Management Working Group and the UN PCG NDE.
- Disaster response and early recovery is mostly not sector based but multi-sectoral, which makes coordination via the cluster approach challenging.
- Intra- and inter-ministerial coordination and communication lines, but also between national and sub-national level especially during disaster response and recovery.
- The cluster approach does not exist at a provincial or lower administrative level in a context where disaster response and recovery is highly decentralized.
- The process is often seen as UN-driven, although clear advantages and benefits have been shown.
- Limited gender mainstreaming and mainstreaming of other cross-cutting issues (age, mental health and psycho-social support, HIV/AIDS and environment) in the cluster activities.

## Overall lessons learnt

- The cluster approach needs to provide clear added value to the Government, INGOs and other partners in order for them to show commitment and involvement.
- A 'learning-by-doing' approach to the introduction and implementation of the cluster approach has led to a customized adaptation to the country context and to needs that are arising in each sector.
- Constant follow-up and strong facilitation from cluster leads increase the results and effectiveness of the clusters.
- The cluster approach can increase responsibility, transparency and accountability by close, joint follow up of planned activities by the cluster members.
- The cluster approach was used as an opportunity to accelerate development of national guidelines, standards and policy and strategy development.

- Clusters are a good mechanism for joint advocacy on disaster response and early recovery issues, and specifically for the introduction and application of standards for example, SPHERE, HAP, INEE, etc.
- Tools, standards, manuals and other materials from the global clusters are useful but have to be adapted to the local context.
- It is crucial to build upon existing and past experiences in terms of efforts, tools, materials, policy and strategy development, etc. avoiding 'reinventing the wheel'.
- Clusters should apply a holistic development approach to the sector besides their focus on short and mid-term disaster response and early recovery interventions and initiatives.

## Overall recommendations

### Information and awareness raising

- The findings of the 2009-2011 Cluster Review Report should be shared with humanitarian partners in the cluster meetings and monthly DMWG meeting. It should also be shared with Government counterparts, through specific discussions on the cluster approach, but potentially also through larger events for awareness raising purposes.
- Continuous awareness raising on the role and tasks of each cluster is required.
- Terms of References of each cluster should be updated annually through in-depth discussion with partners.
- Clusters could be increasingly used for advocacy. Therefore, it is recommended that at in early 2012, clusters identify a number of advocacy messages to jointly work on.
- For learning and information sharing purposes, clusters could establish a closer link with clusters in other countries in the region, e.g. on food security, and improve contact with the IASC and the global cluster system.

### Cluster operational modalities

- Although clusters in Viet Nam operate currently in a context of small to medium scale disasters, clusters should ensure preparedness for major disasters, as originally perceived as the main objective of the cluster approach.
- Inter-cluster coordination can be improved through the further development of an ERN and a strengthened role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) in the cluster system, especially during a potential major disaster.
- The new UN RC should be briefed on the cluster approach. Clear action points should be identified to work towards a stronger role of the RC in the cluster approach and improved inter-cluster coordination.
- A pilot on a decentralized cluster approach could be initiated in some of the most disaster prone provinces, where the provincial authorities were supportive and there was sufficient interest from other stakeholders.
- The cluster approach should be further adapted to the country context and the establishment of new clusters should be further re-examined.

## Relationship with other DRM mechanisms

- Clusters should be integrated under the National Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation once it is established in early 2012.
- Checklists and recommendations in the IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action and other IASC resources should be applied by the clusters.
- Communication responsibilities, e.g. on funding or in relationship with donors, amongst clusters should be better clarified.

## Additional information on the cluster approach

### General:

- IASC website covering all clusters: <http://onerresponse.info>
- Cluster Leadership Approach Applicability Study: Viet Nam. Final Report, November 2008. Prepared on behalf of the DMWG, by the Natural Disaster Mitigation Partnership and UN PCG NDE: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=457>
- IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action: <http://onerresponse.info/crosscutting/gender/Documents/IASC%20Gender%20Handbook%20Final.pdf>

### Cluster specific:

- Global Food Security Cluster: <http://foodsecuritycluster.org/>
- Global Health Cluster: [http://www.who.int/hac/global\\_health\\_cluster/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/hac/global_health_cluster/en/index.html)
- Global Logistics Cluster: <http://www.logcluster.org/>
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE): <http://www.ineesite.org/>

### Terms of references Viet Nam clusters:

- Early Recovery Network: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=459>
- Education in Emergencies Coordination Group: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=462>
- Food Security cluster: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=458>
- Health cluster: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=461>
- Nutrition Cluster and Partnership Group: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=463>
- WASH cluster: <http://www.ccfsc.gov.vn/showpublication.aspx?pcdid=460>