

Section 6

Sharing Leadership

Under the IASC Transformative Agenda, Cluster Lead Agencies were encouraged to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed and supported sharing of cluster leadership by NGOs wherever feasible.

Evaluations and research have found that, when clusters share leadership between UN agencies, NGOs, IOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement,²⁶ partnerships, advocacy and information transfer tend to improve. Sharing leadership produces stronger engagement and better coordination. NGOs are often well established in remote field locations where the UN has limited or no presence. They can offer technical expertise, different approaches to accountability to affected people, long-term involvement in and knowledge of the community, and leadership potential.

Shared forms of leadership distribute global, national or sub-national responsibilities for CLA or cluster coordination to two or more agencies. They set out clear roles, define accountabilities and promote mutual understanding.

When considering sharing the leadership of a cluster, the following points should be taken into account:

1. ToRs or memorandums of understanding **must** be developed, to ensure the parties have a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. Examples of different ToRs are available online.²⁷ Those involved should jointly determine which shared leadership model works best for the context they are in. The ToR must be completed and understood in advance, because organizations that take on a shared leadership role will usually need to recruit full-time staff.
2. Sharing leadership can strengthen cluster leadership but does not displace the core responsibilities and accountability of the designated in-country CLA, including its role as Provider of Last Resort.²⁸

Terms used to describe sharing leadership vary. Co-facilitator, co-coordinator, co-steward, co-lead, sub-cluster coordination, sub-national leadership, work group membership, task force chairs and secondment are all used in different contexts. Within the complex and diverse environment of a response, harmonization of language should be sought; Global Cluster Lead Agencies and HCTs are encouraged to provide guidance when shared leadership ToRs are being developed at country level.

1. Effective shared leadership has transactional costs, in workload and financially. Resource partners, the RC/HC and the HCT should ensure that funding is not an obstacle for agencies that wish to share cluster leadership. When possible (and where financial mechanisms under its authority, the RC/HC and HCT should help to mobilize funds to support shared leadership in a transparent manner; in other cases, and in other countries, donor support should be encouraged.²⁹

26 Subject to the mandates of the three different components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

27 Several clusters, including CCCM and Education, can provide useful sources. See: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/share-leadership>. Refer to the good practice catalogue on the IASC website. In South Sudan, for example, a generic ToR for NGO cluster co-coordinators is being developed.

28 The 2008 definition of Provider of Last Resort (POLR) was revised by the IASC Principals in December 2011 and now reads: "Where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, the cluster lead, as POLR, must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil critical gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-led HCT Humanitarian Response Plan" (revision underlined).

29 *The Framework on Cluster Coordination Costs and Functions in Humanitarian Emergencies at Country*

Sharing leadership

What does sharing leadership mean?

Terminology for shared leadership

For further consideration

2. Sharing will not compensate for poor core leadership. It is often assumed that shared leadership will improve leadership by increasing capacity. It is incumbent on the CLA and its partners to ensure that enough qualified staff are put in leadership positions.
3. All relevant actors should have opportunities to train in areas of competency that are essential to successful management of a shared leadership structure.
4. Not all actors are willing or able to share leadership responsibilities. As with cluster activation, decisions to share leadership should be based on an assessment of needs and capacities on the ground.
5. Though difficulties arise in some cases, it is a goal of every response that national Government should fulfil its responsibilities to its people. Those in shared leadership roles should help to build national capacity.

Examples of shared leadership can be found at Annex III.

Level (May 2011) highlights the value of giving NGOs leadership roles in coordination, and states that “donors will also explore mechanisms to fund NGOs directly for coordination roles”.