

Process to write an advocacy note to promote inter cluster / sector collaboration (ICSC) work

Purpose of an advocacy note: To share the context, the ongoing response, identify challenges / bottlenecks and ways to address them, but the main purpose of an advocacy note is to outline the key asks to your target audience to solve the identified bottlenecks.

Step 1. Strategic thinking

Before you start writing an advocacy note to promote ICSC work, think about its purpose and the information needed to present a strong argument and include all relevant clusters from the beginning of the process. You should have a joint conversation to reflect on the following questions:

- **What for?** Define the joint problem you are trying to solve and how it could be best addressed.
- **Which clusters should be part of this reflection to address the highlighted problem?** Your argument will be stronger if it involves all relevant clusters (typically Food Security, Health, WASH, Nutrition and in some contexts also Protection, Education, Shelter).
- **What evidence do all clusters have to illustrate and strengthen your joint argument?**
- **Who are your target audiences?**
- **What are the key questions/doubts of your target audiences?**
- **What do you need to ask them to do differently** (this would be your key asks)?

Step 2. Joint drafting

- All relevant clusters should be included in the conversation from the beginning for joint strategic thinking and writing.
- Any cluster could take the lead on drafting the joint advocacy note, but all relevant clusters are expected to input along the process and jointly validate. It is important to agree on a clear validation process and deadline from the first discussion to avoid unnecessary delays.

Step 3. Writing process

1. **Title.** Use a short and compelling title that outlines your key joint ask that will be further developed in the document. Consider using a subheading for additional information, if needed.
2. **Opening statement.** Open with a statement that gets your audience's attention right away, perhaps using a prominent fact/data reflecting on the joint problem. This is your lead-in and should be only a sentence or two.
3. **Background information.** In two or three paragraphs, describe the country context, identified needs and its impact on the population. You can include in this section information on the needs identified by each cluster, number of people in need and priority areas. Describe any work with national authorities, where relevant.
4. **Challenges ahead.** Describe the impact caused by the problem if not addressed. You can detail gaps and challenges for an effective response here – for example, limited capacities for ICSC, funding challenges, de-prioritization of specific activities, lack of supplies, or reduced access. Remember, explain why it is important to act and the impact if gaps and challenges are not addressed.
5. **Provide facts and data about the problem.** Data is important to demonstrate that a problem exists and to support your position. Look for facts that are relevant to your audience. To make the document more compelling, data can be presented in a visual format, including photos, graphs, charts, tables, etc (always ensuring an ethical use of data). Some sources of information include: HRP/HNO, Financial Tracking System, IPC reports, cluster dashboards, and joint assessments analysis.

6. **Connect the issue to wider agendas.** Connect the issue to the audience's interest and explain how it contributes to wider agendas, such as SDGs, gender, humanitarian-development nexus, or the realisation of the Grand Bargain commitments on accountability to affected populations or localization of humanitarian assistance.
7. **Your asks.** Clearly state what you want your key target stakeholders to do. The more precise you are on **WHO** has to do **WHAT** and **WHEN**, the clearer your target audience will be in understanding what are you trying to achieve and what it is expected from them. Consider recommendations for different stakeholder groups. For example: governments, donors, OCHA, the wider humanitarian community, development partners, etc.

Tips to write advocacy notes:

1. **Be brief.** Keep the document to 1-2 pages with short paragraphs of 1-3 sentences ensuring that in general each paragraph covers just ONE topic.
2. **Be clear.** Use short sentences and **avoid technical language, acronyms, and abbreviations.**
3. Improve your advocacy note with good **inter-cluster/ sector editing and revision.**