

**The Cluster Approach in Mozambique 2007:
Is it improving emergency response?
An NGO perspective**

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The Cluster Approach in Mozambique 2007: An NGO Perspective

Introduction

This report examines the roll-out of the clusters approach in response to the floods in Mozambique in February 2007, from the perspective of an international non-governmental organisation (NGO).

ActionAid has been following – and participating in – the cluster approach roll-out since it was first set out in the *Humanitarian Response Review* paper in August 2005. As an executive committee member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), which has representation on the InterAgency Standing Committee (IASC), and through its own country programmes, ActionAid seeks to work in partnership with other humanitarian actors to improve emergency response for the benefit of affected people.

In September 2005 the IASC Principals meeting proposed that “clusters should be the framework for humanitarian response in major new emergencies”. Less than a month later, on 8 October 2005, the South Asia earthquake struck, and the Humanitarian Coordinator, together with the United Nations Country Team and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) in Pakistan, took the decision to use the cluster approach. Nine clusters were set up within 24 hours. ActionAid undertook a study of that experience, which was presented jointly with ICVA in Geneva in April 2006.¹

This study, which focuses on the aim of the cluster approach to improve the quality of partnerships, seeks to follow up that earlier research and assess how far the international humanitarian system – led by the United Nations – has come in implementing a more accountable, predictable and coordinated system for emergency response, which truly embraces the concept of partnership. It is ActionAid’s contribution to the first phase of the external

evaluation of the clusters approach, taking place between June and November 2007.

Methodology

Preparation for this report included a visit to Mozambique at the end of September 2007 with time spent in Mutarara, ActionAid’s base during the February 2007 flood. Interviews were carried out with district and regional government officials, affected communities, community leaders and NGOs operating in the area. In Maputo interviews were held with United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef), World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the European Commission, the World Bank, the Mozambican Red Cross, Save the Children and World Vision International. Subsequent interviews by telephone or in person were held with Concern and with the national director of the INGC, and OCHA staff based in Johannesburg, Geneva and New York. The report was written and researched by Anne Street, ActionAid Policy Analyst, International Emergencies and Conflict.

Executive summary and recommendations

The national and international response to the floods in Mozambique in February 2007 is widely considered to have been successful and no-one died as result of delays in response by the government or the international humanitarian community. However, ActionAid’s research has found that the UN in Mozambique was not fully prepared to implement the cluster approach, and as a result there was a lack of clarity about the aims and objectives of the approach – as well as a measure of misunderstanding between participants. In response to this, ActionAid makes the following recommendations:

¹ *The evolving UN cluster approach in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake: An NGO perspective.* ActionAid April 2006.



To the IASC:

- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) training for UN Resident Coordinators on coordinating humanitarian emergencies should continue to be rolled out. This is particularly important in disaster-prone countries where there is no humanitarian coordinator.
- In the interests of accountability in the event of a major emergency in a country with no humanitarian coordinator, the resident coordinator should be designated as humanitarian coordinator for the duration of the emergency.
- UN Resident Coordinators should institute and deepen partnership meetings with NGOs, government and other civil society actors, so that the culture of partnership is firmly rooted prior to an emergency situation developing.
- Clear guidance is needed from OCHA on the flexible application of clusters, to ensure that they fit closely with national government structures in countries with effective national emergency response mechanisms, so as to avoid duplication.
- The terms of reference for the role of co-leads need to be clarified to underline the premise of equality of leadership.
- UN agencies should ensure that staff likely to take up the role of cluster lead have the opportunity to undergo cluster leadership training.
- Potential cluster co-leads outside the UN system should continue to take advantage of cluster lead training.
- NGOs should have direct access to a rapid response umbrella fund available at the national level to enable them to initiate their emergency response without lengthy delays until their funding is assured.
- A brief (two-page) guidance note on the CERF aimed at humanitarian actors outside the UN should be produced.
- At the country level, the UN should establish a roster of interpreters and translators who can be called upon at short notice in the event of an emergency to support the participation of national participants in cluster meetings.
- The guidance notes on using the cluster approach to strengthen humanitarian response should clearly elaborate ways to overcome language barriers.

To the UN in Mozambique:

- UN Resident Coordinator should institute and deepen tri-partite partnership meetings between government, NGOs and other civil society actors, so that the culture of partnership is firmly rooted prior to an emergency situation developing.
- A broad-based humanitarian country team should be established with substantial NGO participation.
- The UN disaster management team should include NGO representation.
- The UN should hold training on the cluster approach, the Global Humanitarian Platform and its Principles of Partnership and other aspects of the humanitarian response reform (concepts behind it, implementation, etc) with the national government, relevant line ministries, and the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC), key staff at relevant levels within the UN agencies, national and international staff. This training should also be held for international and national NGO staff in Mozambique.
- Clusters at the national level should have a similar structure at the field level.

To cluster leads:

- Cluster leads should ensure that participants have clarity from the outset on the aims, objectives and scope of the cluster approach. This is of particular importance to NGOs which have not previously participated in clusters. The roll of the HRSU surge capacity is particularly useful in this regard.
- Cluster leads must take account of the existing UN agencies' institutional capacities in country, and be flexible enough to re-allocate cluster leads accordingly.



- Cluster leads should be familiar with the Principles of Partnership and they should undertake to define their working relationships to reflect the spirit of the Principles of Partnership.
- Outside emergency response periods, cluster leads in countries that are particularly prone to sudden onset emergencies should consider organising periodic meetings with cluster members, and should encourage broad participation from international NGOs and national NGOs.
- As standard practice, cluster leads and cluster participants should meet soon after the emergency phase is ended to evaluate what training could be offered to national organisations to build their capacity and ability to effectively participate in their cluster. This may include issues such as training on developing and undertaking needs assessments that enable a shared interpretation of humanitarian needs.
- Both in contingency planning and after the emergency response phase ends, cluster leads should explore with cluster members the practicalities of sharing frameworks for establishing needs.
- Cluster meetings should be conducted as far as possible in the local language; failing this there should be good interpretation facilities so that local NGOs do not feel excluded. Participants of clusters should feel comfortable speaking in their local language.
- Minutes of cluster meetings and other relevant documents should, as far as possible, be made available in the local language so partners are able to use the information they contain effectively.
- UN cluster leads should disseminate short and concise information to cluster participants about accessing funds

To NGOs:

- National and international NGOs should play a lead role in capacity building for emergency response, both for their own staff and for partner organisations.
- NGOs which wish to become cluster co-leads must be able to fulfil the terms of reference for cluster leads. They must be prepared to be accountable to the humanitarian/residential coordinator.
- NGOs should make their own assessments of which are the most relevant clusters for them to participate in at a national level and make efforts to develop relationships and ensure that the Principles of Partnership are built into their own work.
- National and international NGOs operating in emergency preparedness and response should strengthen coordination mechanisms between them. They should consider inviting UN representatives to these coordination meetings.
- NGOs should participate in contingency planning as an equal partner.

1. The cluster approach

The 2005 *Humanitarian Response Review* paper, commissioned by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, initially identified the cluster approach as a way to improve accountability, predictability and leadership by identifying organisational leads in areas where there was a gap in humanitarian response. These original aims have become modified in the intervening period and the cluster approach is now identified as a means to strengthen the overall capacity, effectiveness and management of the response in five key ways:

- Ensuring more timely and effective responses to new crises by ensuring the maintenance of sufficient global capacity and stockpiles of resources

- Ensuring predictable leadership through designated cluster leads for all main sectors, including the responsibility of acting as 'provider of last resort'
- Developing partnerships within the clusters between UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and the International Red Cross/Red Crescent to work towards agreed humanitarian objectives at global and field level. The intention is that these clusters then interface with national governments and local authorities in a more coordinated way
- Strengthening accountability at the global level, national level (to the humanitarian coordinator in fulfilling agreed roles and responsibilities for cluster leadership), as well as at the local level (to beneficiaries through



participatory approaches, common needs assessments and better monitoring and evaluation)

- Improving strategic field-level coordination and prioritisation in specific sectors by ensuring that the lead operational agency has responsibility for leadership and coordination.²

The cluster approach differs from a sectoral approach in that a sector was understood as a specific area of humanitarian activity, whilst a cluster is a group of organisations and stakeholders that work together to address needs in as specific identified area.

Global implementation

Between the initial adoption of the cluster approach in Pakistan in October 2005 and April 2007, the cluster approach was implemented in six major new emergencies: Indonesia (Yogyakarta), Lebanon, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan and the Philippines.³ During the same period, six ongoing emergencies (out of 25 where humanitarian coordinators are designated) were using the clusters approach: Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda.⁴

By October 2007, country-level cluster approach workshops had been held, and the approach implemented in: Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Somalia, East Timor, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Other country-level workshops were planned for Afghanistan, Cote D'Ivoire, Eritrea, Haiti, Niger, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Regional reform workshops have been held in: Panama (Latin America/Caribbean), Dakar (West Africa), Nairobi (Central/East Africa), Bangkok (Asia-Pacific), Johannesburg (Southern Africa), Amman (Middle East/North Africa).

² <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Default.aspx?tabid=252> 8 October 2007.

³ <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Default.aspx?tabid=310> 8 October 2007.

⁴ Ibid, 8 October 2007.

2. The Principles of Partnership

In parallel with refining and operationalising the cluster approach, the humanitarian reform has also sought to define more closely what partnership means, in principle as well as in practice. The original *Humanitarian response review* paper largely under-emphasised the concept of partnership, which has only become fundamental to the cluster approach and any understanding of the difference between the cluster approach and the previous 'sectoral' method of organising emergency response since the Global Humanitarian Platform meeting in July 2006. Without a clear understanding of what partnership means in practice it is arguable that the clusters approach may not achieve its goals of improving timeliness, effectiveness and coordination.

It was partly in response to this original lack of emphasis on partnership and the role of NGOs and civil society that the Global Humanitarian Platform was set up. Representatives of 40 NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and UN agencies and other intergovernmental bodies attended the first GHP meeting in July 2006. The Global Humanitarian Platform aims to bring together the three families of the international humanitarian community on an equal footing.

The Global Humanitarian Platform seeks to:

- Acknowledge diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognise the interdependence of humanitarian organisations
- Build and nurture effective partnership
- Enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian actions, recognising that no single actor can cover all the needs, and that collaboration is necessary
- Maximise complementarity, as various actors have different mandates, expertise, approaches and resources.

In July 2007 the Global Humanitarian Platform adopted the Principles of Partnership, which are intended to form the basis for the way humanitarian actors work together. The Principles of Partnership is a statement of commitment, recognising interdependence, and finding strength in diversity. The need to articulate principles of partnership between the key



humanitarian actors was part of a recognition that weak partnerships are an impediment to humanitarian response. The principles of

partnership form the basis for collaboration and coordination – the ways in which humanitarian actors interact and work together.

Principles of Partnership, endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform in July 2007

- **Equality**

Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership regardless of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations, independence, and brand identity, and recognise each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organisations from engaging in constructive dissent.

- **Transparency**

Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organisations.

- **Result-oriented approach**

Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-orientated. This requires result-orientated coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

- **Responsibility**

Humanitarian organisations have an obligation to each other to accomplish their task responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

- **Complementarity**

The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantage and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and build on. It must be made an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

Although these Principles of Partnership were not formally adopted until five months after the emergency in Mozambique, the concepts behind them are fundamental to humanitarian reform. As such they provide a useful prism through which to judge the quality of partnerships that the Mozambique clusters roll-out achieved.



3. Mozambique vulnerability profile

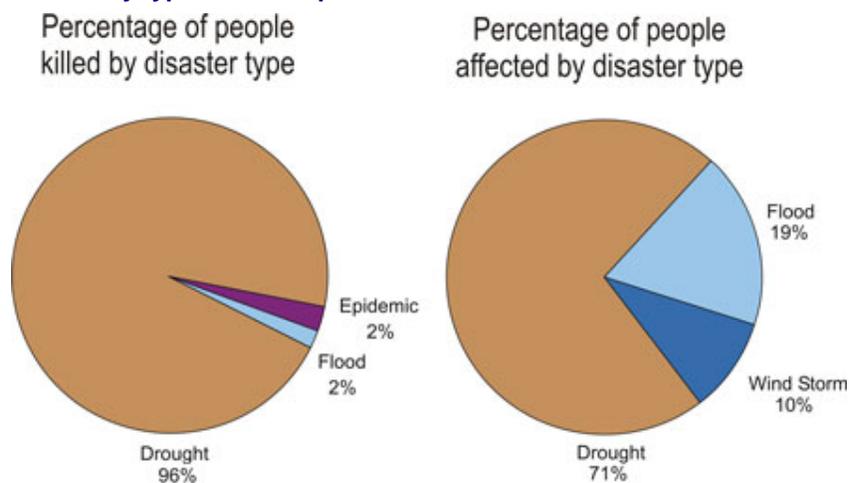
Mozambique is ranked 168th in the 2006 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), out of a total of 177 countries. It has a predominantly rural population with over 75% of the population depending on small-scale agriculture. 38% of the population live on less than US\$1 a day with a gross national income of US\$310 per annum in 2005.⁵ Life expectancy at birth is 42 years, 57% of the population do not have access to a safe water supply, HIV prevalence in over 15 year olds is 16% and the infant mortality rate is high –158 per 100,000 live births.

The country's main hazards are floods, cyclones and droughts. There are over 2,500 kms of coastline, making vulnerability to Indian Ocean cyclones a recurrent reality. Half of Mozambique's territory lies within 12 major river basins – all except one of these rivers have their flood plains inside Mozambique, resulting in widespread and recurrent risk of floods. Drought is also a constant threat, and with changing rainfall patterns caused by climatic changes, many analysts consider this to be Mozambique's most serious potential hazard. The last major droughts occurred between 1980-1985 and affected up to 6 million people.

Mozambique has had 53 natural disasters in the past 45 years – an average of 1.17 disasters per year.⁶ According to an analysis done by the German government it is more frequently and severely affected by natural disasters than virtually any other country in Africa – an estimated 13 million people have been affected by cyclones, droughts and floods since 1980.⁷

Table 1.

Impact of natural disaster by type Mozambique 1980-2006



Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, Belgium (see <http://www.em-dat.net/>)⁸

⁵ http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR_2006_Tables.pdf

⁶ Quoted in Mozambique Coping with Drought and Climate Change a UNDP project

http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Medium-Sized_Project_Proposals/MSP_Proposals/documents/Mozambique-CopingwdDrought-CC.pdf

⁷ Foley C, Mozambique: A case study in the role of the affected state in humanitarian action. HPG Working Paper, Overseas Development Institute September 2007 page 5

⁸ Mozambique National Report on Disaster Reduction - Kobe 2005 (draft). See www.unisdr.org/eng/country-inform/reports/Mozambique-report.pdf



Mozambican government strategies:

The National Disaster Policy was adopted in 1999. It included sectoral disaster reduction plans for flood and cyclone warning, epidemic control and drought and famine monitoring. National action plans for adaptation to climate change and action to combat desertification have been developed by the Ministry of Environment, with support from the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC). Much has happened in the field of humanitarian policy and response since the national disaster policy was adopted in 1999. New draft legislation on emergencies is currently before the parliament, having passed the Council of Ministers. However, the bill has been stuck in the legislative process since the current government took office in 2004, and there is a need for concerted advocacy on the part of the humanitarian community in Mozambique to ensure its passage in an updated form.

In 2005 the Mozambican government signed the Hyogo Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction and the accompanying Hyogo Framework of Action. The 2006-2009 Action Plan for Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA 11) includes disaster risk reduction as part of the strategy for poverty alleviation. Related to this, the government approved an eight-year Master Plan for the Prevention and Mitigation of Natural Disasters in March 2006, which includes proposals for medium and long term reforms to strengthen disaster prediction and mitigation capacity, including through line ministries. However, many of these strategies have yet to be translated into practical actions that have a positive impact on the lives of people living in the communities most vulnerable to floods, droughts and cyclones.

The INGC, created in 1999, has operational responsibility for the coordination of disaster management activities, including multi-sectoral prevention, risk reduction and mitigation, relief and post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction. In 2005 it produced a master plan for disaster management that laid out its overall strategy and coordination approach, including setting up sectoral working groups, and establishing a technical council for disaster management and a national (regional level) structure of national emergency operations centres.

The Technical Council for Disaster Management is accountable to the Coordinating Council of Disaster Management, represented by relevant ministers. The Coordinating Council is chaired by the Prime Minister, with the vice-chair taken by the National Affairs Minister, and has overall responsibility and policy-making authority for the coordination of disaster management. The Technical Council for Disaster Management, is responsible for the preparation of sectoral strategies and plans implemented at national, regional and district level. Stakeholders including UN agencies, NGOs and civil society representatives can participate in the Technical Council when invited by the Director-General of the INGC.⁹

Initially the INGC was a unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it has subsequently moved to the Ministry of National Affairs. The INGC has now created the National Emergency Operations Centre (CENOE) with emergency response operational centres located in Caia (the nearest town to the Zambezi river floods) and Vilanculos (in the south) to implement the cyclone response. A third centre is planned for Nampala province to cover the northern area, which is prone to cyclones. The establishment of these centres has been instrumental in improving the efficiency of response, enabling different actors to coordinate in a centralised location and enhancing the flow of information.

The INGC's present structure was put in place under the leadership of its Director-General Paulo Zucula, a former vice-minister of agriculture who took office in late 2005. Through his strong strategic leadership and political connections, together with recruitment of skilled staff from different ministries including finance, agriculture and defence, the INGC is growing in institutional capacity and effectiveness, and is widely attributed as being a key reason for the success of the national response to the 2007 floods. As CENOE has taken on a greater operational role, so the INGC has emphasised more its coordination role.

Since 1999 the INGC has developed annual national contingency plans in anticipation of the rainy and cyclone season. These plans are applicable both at the national and community

⁹ Ibid



level, and tested through simulation exercises. In October 2006 the flood simulation exercise was tested in the Zambezi area with the participation of Unicef and WFP staff, and other partners.

The INGC's emphasis on community-level preparedness aims to establish village level disaster response committees throughout the flood prone areas, training the committees in monitoring hazards such as water level rises, and in use of early warning instruments such as radio alerts. Radio committees will be trained to know the relevant radio stations and learn the times that flood warnings are broadcast, and then to take appropriate measures in response to these warnings.

This work has started in the Zambezi area, and ActionAid is collaborating with the regional INGC to provide technical support as well as to distribute radios and train community leaders.

During a meeting with community representatives in late September 2007 in Ihangoma, participants were keen for this initiative to reach their communities so that people can build on their own traditional coping mechanisms and combine these with information provided by effective early warning. Paulo Zucula told ActionAid in October that the INGC sees the creation of effective village and district-level disaster risk management committees as key to its strategy of effective disaster risk reduction. Early warning is also part of this integrated strategy, and especially key for effective disaster prevention in an area like the Zambezi, which is prone to rapid onset flooding.

Risk mapping has been carried out for floods, cyclones and drought, although the most detailed flood assessments have been done in the Limpopo and Buzi river basins, not the Zambezi where the 2007 floods hit hard.

4. Clusters approach roll-out in Mozambique

Background to the emergency

The Zambezi River is the largest river in Mozambique, with water joining it from seven countries upstream. It has the fourth largest flood plain in Africa, with some flooding occurring almost on an annual basis. The construction of the Kariba Dam in 1959 and the Cahora Bassa Dam in 1974 diminished the impact of these annual floods, although there continues to be a cyclical pattern of flooding, with a major flood occurring every five to ten years.

Unusually heavy rains along the Zambezi River – upstream from Mozambique – since December 2006 had caused river levels to rise in January and early February 2007. On the last day of January 500 people were rescued from river islands in Mutarara Caia, Marromeu and Chinde districts as water levels along the river.

Scope and impact of the floods

According to the INGC, the flooding affected around 285,000 people, including more than 163,000 people who sought shelter in emergency accommodation and resettlement centres. The January rains had followed earlier flooding

between October and December 2006, which had, in turn, affected 46,500 people. The 2007 floods and cyclone caused approximately US\$71 million in damage to local infrastructure and destroyed 277,000 hectares of crops – an estimated 80% of the cereal crop in the affected areas. The loss of assets such as homes, clothes, agricultural tools and seeds had a potentially devastating impact on a population that lives from subsistence agriculture and fishing.

Implementation

By 4th February the INGC had formally declared a red alert and there were calls for the evacuation of people living around the lower Zambezi. The government's Technical Committee for Disaster Management met representatives of the UN, the Mozambique Red Cross and NGOs on 7th February and announced the relocation of the INGC director to the village of Caia, a central point along the Zambezi, to coordinate the response. Caia then became the hub of the response and the largest UN agencies. Unicef, WFP and FAO all had a presence in the village and WHO sent representatives to the weekly CENOE meetings in Caia. The IFRC were also



present, as were a number of more locally based NGOs which only have a small presence in Maputo.

Although the UN's Disaster Management Team Technical Working Group had decided on 5th February to recommend to the UN Country Team that the situation warranted a CERF funding application and that the cluster approach should be adopted, it was not until it met on 8th February that a formal decision was taken by the UN Country Team to adopt the cluster approach and not until 12th February that clusters were established.¹⁰ The IFRC was apparently consulted about this decision.

According to the IASC's November 2006 *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*, "In the event of a sudden new emergency requiring a multi-sectoral response with participation of a wide range of humanitarian actors, the cluster approach should be used from the start in planning and organising the international response. The Humanitarian Coordinator (or Resident Coordinator in countries where a Humanitarian Coordinator has not yet been appointed at the beginning of the emergency) should consult all relevant partners at the country level."¹¹

However, it is not clear how far NGOs were consulted or included in the decision-making process prior to the cluster approach being set up on 12th February. Unicef had informally discussed the potential use of the cluster approach with the INGC on 4th February. The OCHA team leader and the Unicef Representative briefed NGOs on the cluster approach on the same day that the cluster approach was set up.¹²

Ten clusters were set up with the support of an OCHA humanitarian officer from the Humanitarian Reform Support Unit in Geneva

¹⁰ Cosgrave J, Goncalves C, Martyris D, Polastro R, and M Sikumba-Dils. *Inter-agency Real-Time evaluation of the response to the February 2007 floods and cyclone in Mozambique*. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Standing Committee, Humanitarian Country Team, Mozambique, April 2007.

¹¹ *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*. Inter-Agency Standing Committee November 2006.

¹² Op cit Cosgrave Footnote 10

who had arrived in Maputo following a request made by the UN Country Team on 8th February.



Table 2. Cluster roles and leads

Cluster for emergency response	Cluster lead	Cluster participants
Logistics	WFP	Unicef, UNDP, IOM, IFRC, Africare, Cafod, CEDES, Care, Jacana, CUAMM, Mozambican Red Cross, EC, Food for the Hungry International, Humedica, German Agro Action, LWF/ACT, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, Save the Children Alliance, UNOCHA, USAID, World Vision, HelpAge International, Kulima, Oxfam, Italian Embassy, INGC
Food security	WFP/FAO	IRD, SCA, World Vision, World Relief, CEDES, ADMR, FHI, German Agro Action, Caritas, IMVF, Mozambican Red Cross, Kulima ActionAid, Africare, Concern, Cafod, Fewsnets, IRD, Oikos, Adra, USAID
Telecommunications	WFP	Unicef, Télécoms sans Frontières, Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Oxfam (representing NetHope)
Water, sanitation and hygiene	Unicef	Oxfam, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, Médecins sans Frontières, International Relief and Development, Food for the Hungry International, Concern, IFRC, Mozambican Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, World Vision, German Agro Action, USAID
Nutrition	Unicef	Save the Children, WHO, FAO, WFP, Care, World Vision, Food for the Hungry International, World Relief, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, UNAIDS, Médecins sans Frontières.
Health	WHO	Medicus Mundi, World Vision, NAFEZA, TRIMODER, UNFPA, Unicef, UNAIDS
Education	Save the Children Alliance / Unicef	World Vision, Concern, Unesco, Africare, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, Instituto da Comunicação Social, ActionAid
Protection	Save the Children Alliance / Unicef	World Vision, UNFPA, Unesco, WFP, Africare, Handicap International, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, ActionAid, Concern, Halo Trust, ASADEC, ASVIMO, Mozambican Red Cross, Helpage International, Terre des Hommes, Rede Came, Rede da Criança Food for the Hungry International
Emergency shelter	Mozambican Red Cross/IFRC	Habitat for Humanity, German Agro Action, Samaritan's Purse International Relief, Unicef, Kulima, IOM, UNDP, UN Habitat
Early recovery	UNDP	All partners

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¹³ Unicef Situation Report, Mozambique, 12-14 March 2007 (see www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/EVOD-6ZBDNZ?OpenDocument).



Training and preparation for implementation

The clusters approach was adopted without formal discussion with the government.¹⁴ Prior to the implementation of the cluster approach in Mozambique, the wider humanitarian community in-country had not received systematic training on the cluster approach. WFP had called humanitarian actors to a meeting in mid 2006 to discuss emergency response in relation to logistics. This brought a number of main actors together, enabling a clearer understanding of the differing capacities and, most usefully, resulting in people getting to know each other. This led to some follow-up meetings convened by UNDP but was not pursued systematically. The Technical Working Group of the UN's Disaster Management Team had some discussions on the clusters approach but these did not include partners outside the UN system. A number of UN staff attended a two-day regional workshop on humanitarian reform in January in Johannesburg, but it is unclear how widely they shared their learning with colleagues in their own agencies, or indeed more widely.

Several of the individuals that ActionAid interviewed reported that there was a lack of clarity about the objectives behind the cluster approach or its difference with the previous sectoral approach. One cluster lead told ActionAid that in his view the cluster approach was virtually the same thing in operational terms as a sectoral approach, with the key difference being that it formalised the concept of agency of last resort. Other cluster leads reported that while they knew about clusters via the global headquarters as well as the OCHA regional office, it was mainly in the form of documents and there had not been training, a presentation or discussions with NGOs.

The fact that the cluster approach was being adopted without prior in-country training meant that some of the basic concepts that distinguish the clusters approach from a sector approach were not clear to the participants in the clusters, or even to the cluster leads. This lack of knowledge of the clusters also applied to the government. The INGC's central regional director, based in Beira, and covering the Zambezi flood

plain, told ActionAid in September that the coordination between the clusters and the government needs improvement, and that the clusters need to work closer with the government in planning the response at the local level.

Partnership

At the time the emergency started, the UN in Mozambique was not putting the concept of partnership, as espoused by the UN humanitarian reforms at that time, into practice by working closely with NGOs and other non-state actors. There was no Inter-Agency Standing Committee, or Humanitarian Partnership Country Team, (HCT) and the Disaster Management Team did not have any NGO participation. Although an HCT was established on 13th February, it did not include any NGO members. An IASC was formed for the duration of the emergency, but the Resident Coordinator subsequently disbanded it. Civil society representatives do participate in the resident coordinator's advisory committee.

Partnership is something that is built up over time and involves parties getting to know each other and developing a level of trust in each other's capacities and reliability. The clusters in Mozambique where the concept of partnership was most effectively put into practice were also some of those where the participants had worked together previously and knew each other's expertise. WASH, lead by Unicef had convened a regular water and sanitation group, GAS, with an emergency sub-committee, so participants knew each other prior to February 2007. Indeed Unicef's water, sanitation and hygiene cluster lead commented, "the institutionalisation of coordination requires that we keep looking forward to continuing coordination"¹⁵

These coordination meetings are continuing. Unicef and Save the Children's positive collaboration in co-leading the education cluster was also based on an existing relationship that had been built up prior to the emergency. WFP and FAO as cluster leads of food security convene a monthly meeting that also links with other food sector actors, however, attendance by NGOs is often low. Initially these meetings particularly focused around coordination of planning and mapping, as well as resource

¹⁴ Op Cit Foley footnote 7

¹⁵ Author interview, Maputo, 1 October 2007



mobilisation after the CERF. Some members of the protection cluster are also continuing to meet.

Some clusters had wide participation from national and international NGOs, while some of the more specialist clusters such as education, health and telecommunications, had fewer than six members outside the UN agencies. One cluster lead reflected on how difficult it was to get national NGOs' participation, which he described as 'weak'. Save the Children tried to address this situation within the education cluster by inviting local NGOs to the cluster, but some felt marginalised and their participation dropped off. The quality of NGO participation in the clusters was variable. One international NGO noted that NGO participants need to prepare better prior to meetings so that they could give definite assurances of commitments.

One cluster lead commented that 80% of delivery within the cluster was provided by three non-UN operational agencies that came into Mozambique, delivered services and subsequently left the country, thereby making continued coordination and the development of partnership on the ground a challenge. One way around this is to continue to develop and deepen cluster coordination at the global level between NGO providers, and to feed into country-level coordination where possible, for example through coordination in contingency planning: This poses particular challenges for international NGOs without an ongoing presence in-country, or for NGOs that do have development programmes in-country but do not focus on emergency preparedness, contingency planning or disaster risk reduction in between emergencies.

Another challenge to deepening the concept of partnership in the clusters approach is the issue of funding (discussed on page 20). The fact that the relationship between NGOs and UN agencies is one of funder and implementer creates a major challenge. Some UN agencies have money that they can rapidly draw on in an emergency situation, but for other agencies, and for many of the NGOs, availability of ready funds is limited, meaning they are dependent on other agencies and assurances of outside funding before they can deliver assistance.

These operational constraints pose a particular challenge for developing principles of partnership. For the concepts of partnership to truly become

embedded in the clusters approach, both national and international NGOs and UN agencies need to address some of these challenges of how to deepen partnership. It was notable during the research for this paper, carried out in late September/early October 2007, that the national and international NGOs involved in emergency response were not at that time meeting on a regular basis to discuss emergency preparedness or response coordination. However, a meeting was planned for October, and these coordination meetings, convened jointly by Save the Children and Concern in Maputo, are now underway on a regular basis.

Recommendations:

- *UN Resident Coordinator should institute and deepen tri-partite partnership meetings with government, NGOs and other civil society actors, so that the culture of partnership is firmly rooted prior to an emergency situation developing.*
- *The UN Resident Coordinator should establish a Humanitarian Partnership Country Team or an IASC and ensure that meetings are held throughout the year with substantial participation of NGOs.*
- *The UN Disaster Management Team should include an NGO representative.*
- *In countries that are particularly prone to sudden onset emergencies, cluster leads should consider organising periodic meetings with cluster members outside emergency response periods and should encourage broad participation from international NGOs and national NGOs.*
- *National and international NGOs operational in emergency preparedness and response should consider strengthening coordination mechanisms between themselves. They should consider inviting UN representatives to these coordination meetings.*

Capacity building

Developing local capacity is a key strategy for effective disaster preparedness, and something that is highlighted in the Global Humanitarian Platform's Principles of Partnership. Yet apart from working with the Mozambique Red Cross, the UN humanitarian system in the country seems to have paid insufficient attention to supporting the development of the skills base of



local civil society organisations. It is notable that very few of the organisations listed in Table 3 are Mozambican organisations. The exception to this is the Mozambique Red Cross, which participated in five of the ten clusters. WHO works closely with the Mozambique Red Cross and has provided materials and training of trainers for emergency response and cholera prevention.

On the other hand, UN agencies and bilateral donors are providing capacity building support to the government; for example Unicef is currently supporting the government to make an inventory of its emergency equipment in preparation for future events. The INGC's biggest bilateral donor is the German government which has provided €1.75 million for disaster preparedness, as well as seconded staff and provided project funding for the emergency simulations and equipment for the emergency response centres.

- *As standard practice, cluster leads and cluster participants should meet soon after the emergency phase has ended to evaluate what training could be offered to national organisations to build their capacity and ability to effectively participate in their cluster. This may include issues such as training on developing and undertaking needs assessments that enable a shared interpretation of humanitarian needs.*
- *National and international NGOs should also play a lead role in capacity building for emergency response, both for their own staff as well as for national and local partner organisations.*

Coordination with national government

The clusters approach had not been fully discussed with the INGC or Mozambique's government ministries prior to its roll-out.¹⁶ The government has its own structure of working groups, which are elaborated in its 2005 Master Plan for Disaster Management. This meant there were essentially two parallel coordinations running alongside each other, one led by the INGC and the other by the Humanitarian Country Team. This led to a proliferation of meetings as cluster leads, and indeed cluster members, also attended meetings covering similar issues but coordinated by the government

This exacerbated a situation commonly experienced by humanitarian workers at the height of an emergency response phase: that of meeting overload. This is especially challenging for cluster leads who convened the cluster meetings, and also attended cluster lead meetings, cluster lead meetings with government participation in the CENOE daily meetings, and government working groups, meetings within their own agencies, and still needed time to oversee the preparation and dissemination of information to cluster members, as well as preparation of funding applications and delivery of response.

In its Poverty Action Plan (PARPA) the government defines three pillars: governance, economic development and human capital, through which international collaboration is coordinated. One of the cluster leads noted some of the challenges caused by the fact that the structure of the clusters didn't link in closely enough with the government structures, and considered it the resident coordinator's role to structure the clusters in a manner appropriate to the in-country situation.¹⁷ Although the central guidance notes on cluster implementation do refer to the need to structure clusters with reference to national government structures, this cannot be done in the heat of an emergency. Several respondents noted that this requires careful prior preparation, consultation and planning. It is understood that since ActionAid conducted the research for this paper, discussions have taken place with the government on closer harmonisation of response structures, and that the clusters in Mozambique will now more closely reflect the government's own working groups.

- *The UN should explore ways to harmonise cluster meetings more closely with government structures in countries with effective national emergency response mechanisms.*
- *Contingency planning on the implementation of the cluster approach should include national government and NGOs, and, where appropriate, district level government.*

¹⁶ Op cit Foley footnote 7

¹⁷ Author's interview, October 2007



Language

Holding cluster meetings and circulating minutes in a foreign language presents a potential impediment to the implementation of the Principles of Partnership, which note, under the principle of complementarity, that “*language and cultural barriers must be overcome*”. The food security cluster lead acknowledged that language had been a challenge in the cluster. At the request of some participants who did not speak adequate Portuguese, the cluster was conducted in English and this had a negative effect on the ability of local partners to participate. The Real Time Evaluation also noted that some of the OCHA staff sent to Mozambique in the early days of the response did not speak Portuguese. This should only present a problem if the UN is unable to provide interpretation during the cluster meetings. The nutrition cluster lead noted that local NGOs clearly felt sidelined in meetings where discussion lapsed into English, despite the fact that the cluster lead did attempt to provide translation himself to try to ensure all participants stayed involved. In some cases discussion was in Portuguese and the meeting minutes were in English. For other clusters, language was less of a problem as all participants spoke Portuguese. In the regional coordination centre in Caia and also in local centre of Mutarara meetings were held in Portuguese and any UN officials who did not speak the language found translators.

- *Cluster meetings should be conducted as far as possible in the local language; failing this there should be good interpretation facilities so that local NGOs do not feel excluded. National participants of clusters should feel comfortable speaking in their local language.*
- *Minutes of cluster meetings and other relevant documents should, as far as possible, be made available in the local language so partners are able to use the information they contain effectively.*
- *At the country level, the UN should establish a roster of interpreters and translators who can be called upon at short notice in the event of an emergency to support the participation of national participants in Cluster meetings.*

Needs assessments

To increase the coordination and effectiveness of clusters, members need to be working towards

establishing a shared analysis of assessments and exploring the use of similar frameworks. Cluster leads need to play a pro-active role in deepening confidence between cluster members to enable greater coordination and sharing of data.

- *Both in contingency planning and after the emergency response phase ends, cluster leads should explore with cluster members the practicalities of sharing frameworks for establishing needs.*

Cluster leadership

Despite the fact that the IASC produced a *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response* in November 2006, which dealt at some length with cluster leadership at the country level and listed the responsibilities of sector/cluster leads, insufficient attention has been given to the issue of joint cluster leads or co-leadership. Is the co-lead a junior partner, an equal, a watchdog or an administrative support? What happens in cases where one agency clearly has much greater capability, as happened in the case of the logistics, where WFP had far greater coordination capacity than its co-lead World Vision. Another case in point is the food security cluster that was co-lead by WFP and FAO. FAO found the role of co-lead quite challenging, particularly because of the agency’s much smaller in-country staff and funding designated for emergencies as compared to WFP.

A World Vision employee described the experience of being co-lead of the logistics cluster with WFP as one whereby after two or three meetings WFP ‘seemed to find its feet and pushed World Vision aside, they took the lead and World Vision was side-lined.’ The situation became so difficult that World Vision raised concerns in Geneva and asked for the assistance of the UN Residential Coordinator to help clarify roles.

The joint co-lead of the education cluster between Unicef and Save the Children was much more successful, as they worked together well and complemented one another. It is notable that this relationship was based on a shared history of prior collaboration that the Save the Children



director in Mozambique described as being one of equal partners.

NGOs that wish to co-chair a cluster need also to be able to fulfil the terms of reference for cluster leads. This involves making themselves accountable to the humanitarian or resident coordinator for the duration of the emergency. This is an important consideration which NGOs need to think through carefully.

It appears that despite guidance from the global level, too much still depends on the personality and skills of the cluster lead, and attention should be given to ways to address this. In one cluster a meeting was cancelled at short notice because the cluster lead could not attend, raising questions about the ownership of this coordination mechanism.

One cluster lead felt that although the experience had been positive there needs to be more sharing of responsibilities, and the experience needs to be empowering for all participants. There is little guidance on how to devolve responsibility within the cluster, and to capture the capacities of all actors. He noted that participants within the cluster need prior training on common objective setting and developing a division of labour within the cluster. Another cluster lead spoke of 'rotating leadership' where the cluster lead is designated in-country rather than from UN headquarters.

Recommendations:

- *The terms of reference for role of co-leads, needs to be clarified to underline the premise of equality of leadership.*
- *UN agencies should ensure cluster leadership training is provided to personnel likely to take up this role.*
- *NGOs which wish to become cluster co-leads must be able to fulfil the terms of reference for cluster leads. They must be prepared to be accountable to the humanitarian/residential coordinator*
- *The practice of cluster co-leadership must not become an exercise whereby the NGOs are used to legitimise the language of partnership.*

Access to funding

The varying experience of the different cluster members in attempting to access funding is perhaps the clearest example of the lack of effective partnership that ActionAid's research has identified. The fact that UN agencies can access CERF funding and NGOs and international NGOs cannot directly access it places an immediate strain on the concept of partnership. One cluster lead noted that the way the process is currently structured promotes competition not only between the UN agencies themselves but also with NGOs.

Furthermore, agencies that cannot access internal funds at short notice are hampered in any attempt to effectively lead a cluster. This is true both for NGOs – whose funding options in relation to the CERF are limited by having to go via a UN agency – as well as for organisations such as International Organisation of Migration, which had no contingency funds in-country to use to enable it to lead the shelter cluster. Even with the relatively rapid turn-around of the CERF application, from the initial decision to apply being made by the UN Country Team on 8th February, the finalised application submitted to the New York CERF secretariat on 20th February and approval for US\$7.625million on 21st February, some agencies experienced a delay in receiving funding.

While some of the cluster leads, such as Unicef, developed the CERF proposal in close collaboration with all cluster members, other leads did not. The food security cluster, led by WFP (and co-led by FAO) devised the application without the input of NGOs, informing partners that a portion of the funding, should it be approved, would be channelled to NGOs providing the food assistance. It was the only cluster that adopted this approach. The WFP cluster lead acknowledged that the NGOs were informed about the CERF application rather than consulted, and next time they should be more closely involved in the process.¹⁸ One international ngo noted that they were only given a matter of hours to prepare their proposal for funding via one of the UN agencies for the CERF application, and that being able to work on the document overnight would have enabled them to

¹⁸ Author interview, Maputo October 2007



produce a much clearer proposal. On the other hand some of the larger international NGOs received funding under the CERF, and felt that information sharing with respect to funding within the relevant cluster had been good.

The Real Time Evaluation reported that, “Local NGOs were constrained by a lack of funding... [and] felt that they had been left out of the international response”.¹⁹ One international NGO ActionAid spoke with noted that many local NGOs had not even heard of the CERF prior to the emergency and would have been helped by a very short summary document in Portuguese. Indeed it is noticeable how few Mozambique NGOs and civil society organisations are included in either the clusters membership or the CERF funding. The Mozambique Red Cross, which receives substantial funding from its international network as well as the European Commission, is the noticeable exception to this. It has national reach and capacity, with a staff of over 200, plus many active volunteers and is actively engaged in disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness and emergency response. It provides an operational capacity that other local NGOs cannot match, lacking as they do the funding for a standing capacity of a trained volunteer network. However, it is not the only national organisation in the country engaged in effective humanitarian work, and UN system neglects other national actors to the detriment of the response.

A number of agencies interviewed for this report, both within the UN family as well as NGOs, noted the major challenge of mobilising funds for recovery. Funding is available via CERF for life-saving response work, but it is a major challenge to find funds for the transition to recovery and long-term development work, especially in smaller emergencies with less international coverage, and where NGOs cannot launch successful international appeals. Respondents noted that there is a need for a better funding mechanism to finance the transitional stage of an emergency. Without better funding mechanisms for the transition to recovery and development, it is more challenging for the early recovery cluster to function from the start of an emergency, and to integrate its agenda into that of other clusters.

In the case of the Mozambique floods, some NGOs did get funding from the European

Community Humanitarian Organisation. Another alternative is bilateral funding, although with major donors such as the UK government supporting the UN humanitarian reforms and the establishment of the CERF there are indications that bilateral donors are increasingly seeking to channel their funds through these instruments.

The Real Time Evaluation recommended establishing an umbrella fund for NGO response to run parallel to the CERF. It argued that such a response could be managed by the resident (or humanitarian) coordinator in conjunction with the Humanitarian Country Partnership Team. This could address the problem of lack of equal access to funding for civil society organisations, while at the same time ensuring appropriate accountability by placing the management of the fund’s distribution with the UN country team. This umbrella funding could operate along the lines of the Humanitarian Response Funds which operate in some countries. ActionAid endorses the recommendation for a rapid response umbrella fund for access by national and international NGOs.

- *UN cluster leads should simplify and disseminate information to cluster participants about accessing funds.*
- *The UN should establish an umbrella fund, available in-country for NGO/civil society access.*

5. Conclusions

The national and international humanitarian response to the 2007 floods in Mozambique is widely considered to have been successful. No-one died because of a slow or inept response on the part of the national authorities or the international humanitarian community. The Mozambican government played a particularly effective role in coordinating the response with different partners (bilaterals and multilaterals), both at the national level as well as in the flood-affected region. Its strong and effective leadership is acknowledged by all actors. The fact that the emergency was of limited duration and local coping strategies built up over time were largely able to absorb the shock helped to prevent a more serious disaster. The UN resident coordinator also took a leading role in ironing out problems during the emergency response.

¹⁹ Op cit Cosgrave footnote 10



In general, the cluster approach worked well, with enhanced information sharing and coordination among humanitarian actors. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that over 15 months after the cluster approach roll-out by the UN at the global level, many of the humanitarian actors in Mozambique were not fully conversant with the objectives and rationale of the approach. This included staff in the UN, in the Mozambican government, in international NGOs, and Mozambican NGO staff. Furthermore a number of the action points that ActionAid highlighted in its April 2006 report on Pakistan – *The Evolving UN Cluster Approach in the Aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: An NGO perspective* – remain outstanding. These relate, among other things, to funding, involvement of non-UN organisations and language issues.

Prior to the emergency, many of the national and international NGOs and civil society actors working in Mozambique did not have close relationships with the UN agencies. Indeed, many hardly interacted with the UN at all. There was no broad-based humanitarian partnership country team that met on a regular basis and there were

no ongoing formal coordination mechanisms between the UN and NGOs.

During the emergency phase, the experience of many agencies in working together in the clusters was good. However, a number of these partnerships established at cluster level during the emergency have dissipated, although a few clusters continue to meet as a sector. The education and protection participants have recently been meeting to discuss emergency preparedness and most of the original cluster members were present at that meeting. Some water, sanitation and hygiene cluster members continue to meet monthly under the auspices of Unicef, and food security members also continue to meet. The UN organised a two-day meeting in November with the participation of the government and NGOs to discuss emergency preparedness and contingency planning. It is hoped that the UN resident coordinator in Mozambique will play a leadership role in continuing to develop and deepen the Principles of Partnership outside the emergency period in order to improve disaster preparedness and the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

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