Evaluation Report

Evaluation of the UNICEF Role as Cluster Lead (Co-Lead) Agency (CLARE II)

January 2022

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for every child

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PREFACE

Since the introduction of the cluster approach in 2005, UNICEF has held a unique role as cluster (co-)lead agency (CLA) for four clusters/areas of responsibility, including nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education (with Save the Children International), and the child protection area of responsibility. The first evaluation of UNICEF's cluster lead agency role in humanitarian action ('CLARE I') was conducted in 2013, with the objective of assessing how well UNICEF was carrying out its CLA responsibilities and providing recommendations toward further strengthening this role in the future.

Since CLARE I, the humanitarian landscape has undergone a number of fundamental shifts. The number of people in humanitarian need has grown systematically over the years, along with the complexity of the crises in which they are caught up. The total number of humanitarian situations that UNICEF and implementing partners have responded to has also increased over the years.[1] At the same time, the international community has made a number of important commitments geared toward improving accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in humanitarian action. The cluster approach has continued to mature and evolve in response to these trends; against this backdrop, re-assessing and taking stock of the ways in which UNICEF is fulfilling its CLA responsibilities was a clear priority.

Accordingly, the UNICEF Evaluation Office commissioned the second 'CLARE' evaluation (CLARE II) in 2020 in order to shed light on the challenges and opportunities UNICEF faces in carrying out

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1 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Global Annual Results Report 2019', UNICEF, New York, 2020; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Global Humanitarian Overview, 2020', OCHA, New York, 2020.

its CLA responsibilities, to assess progress over the past seven years, and to inform the future direction of the cluster lead agency role in UNICEF.

On one hand, the evaluation suggests that UNICEF is generally delivering on the main coordination responsibilities associated with the CLA role, at both the global and country levels. On the other hand, while the evaluation presents a few promising examples of leadership, the leadership responsibilities of the CLA are less well defined and fulfilled.

The evaluation points out that country-based clusters have become 'conduits for process' and are overwhelmed by cumbersome tasks that jeopardize strategic thinking and vision. It sheds light on the generally insufficient support and recognition that UNICEF grants to cluster coordinators, leading individuals covering this role to be the ultimate drivers of CLA performance (as opposed to the organization taking a more institutional approach). The evaluation reveals the power dynamics stemming from UNICEF's dual role as CLA and 'donor', which affect partner perceptions of UNICEF and its performance as CLA. The evaluation also flags the lack of clear direction given by UNICEF at country level on how to implement commitments such as accountability to affected populations, localization, the humanitarian-development nexus and the centrality of protection, as well as the unlocked potential of co-leadership arrangements.

Importantly, some of the evaluation's findings point to long-standing issues (raised over seven years ago by the CLARE I evaluation) and, as such, warrant urgent attention if UNICEF is committed to performing the CLA role to the fullest. The lack of a career path for cluster coordinators, still too-frequent instances of double-hatting, unclear/inconsistent internal reporting lines for cluster coordinators, lack of clarity around the concept of provider of last resort and weak cross-cluster coordination are some of these outstanding issues.

The evaluation was conducted by a specialized team of independent consultants. I would like to thank the team leader, Ed Schenkenberg, for his leadership and guidance, and the rest of the team for their committed efforts throughout the evaluation, including Karin Wendt, Manisha Thomas, Francesca Ballarin and Velina Stoianova.

A special thanks is also due to the evaluation's reference group members, who contributed valuable time and energy to the evaluation. This includes Nisar Syed and Lilian Kastner (UNICEF GCCU), who have consistently guided and assisted the evaluation team, together with Maria Agnese Giordano (GEC), Stefano Fedele (GNC), Ron Pouwels and Joyce Mutiso (CP AoR), Monica Ramos (GWC), Colleen Emary (World Vision, nutrition cluster), Anita Queirazza (Plan International, CP AoR), Susanna Davies (Save the Children International, CP AoR), Michelle Brown (Save the

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the advent of the cluster approach in 2005, UNICEF has undertaken a number of evaluative exercises that examine, directly or indirectly, its role as cluster lead agency. The most important of these, the *Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action* ("CLARE I"), was undertaken in 2013. The evaluation concluded that overall, UNICEF had invested significantly in implementing its cluster (co-)lead agency (CLA) role, with positive results. Progress has also been highlighted in several other evaluations, reviews and evaluative exercises undertaken over the years. The present evaluation reviews UNICEF's experience as CLA since 2013, assessing progress made, identifying remaining gaps and making recommendations geared toward helping UNICEF improve its performance as cluster (co-)lead agency going forward.

The evaluation looked at the four UNICEF (co-)led clusters (namely, nutrition, education, water, sanitation and hygiene and the child protection area of responsibility) with equal interest. It investigated how UNICEF carries out its CLA role at the global, regional and country levels. At the global level, the evaluation assessed UNICEF's role in leading the global clusters in setting policy, standards and

guidelines; building response capacity; providing operational support; and ensuring synergies with other (global) clusters and inter-cluster collaboration through the global cluster coordination group. At the country level, and with a particular focus on eight country contexts (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sudan),[2] the evaluation considered how UNICEF has carried out its CLA responsibilities to support service delivery; informing the Humanitarian Coordinator/humanitarian country team strategic decision-making, planning and implementation of cluster strategies; monitoring and evaluation of performance; contingency planning and robust advocacy.

A description of UNICEF's role as CLA appears in the organization's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs):

> **Support the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles.**

In line with this definition, the evaluation team separated CLA responsibilities into two broad but interlinked categories: coordination and leadership. Progress was assessed against the tenets of the cluster approach, namely: predictability, accountability and partnership. In addition, the commitments made at the time of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and/or in line with the Grand Bargain were taken into account, as were the CLARE I recommendations.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from global, regional and country levels. Due to restrictions in movement linked to the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation team used virtual data-collection tools including remote semi-structured interviews with key informants, an online survey among UNICEF's cluster partners and cluster coordinators, and a focus group discussion with members of the evaluation reference group to validate specific findings. Primary data collected through these methods were triangulated by the findings from a systematic document review and subsequent analysis.

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2   The specific countries to be considered were chosen by the evaluation management group, with advice from the evaluation reference group.

Main conclusions of the evaluation

1   UNICEF has generally delivered on the coordination responsibilities of its CLA role

Using the benchmarks of existing cluster approach policy, UNICEF has generally fulfilled its CLA role in terms of coordination. The organization has to some extent worked to ensure that cluster coordinators are in place globally and, with some exceptions, at country level. However, these positions are not always staffed in a timely and consistent manner. Global clusters are often called upon to fill staff gaps. UNICEF has not made a concerted effort to ensure coordination and information management staff are readily available and supported in their career paths.

UNICEF has generally worked to ensure that the clusters have dedicated capacity and tools for information management; collectively produce and circulate policies and other guidance materials; provide technical support to cluster participants; and provide a venue for inter-agency sectoral consultations and partnerships. However, the clusters have taken on more responsibilities and tasks than initially foreseen. In addition to creating a number of challenges, this 'mission creep' has resulted in a rather mechanical way of working in which processes and tools (templates, dashboards, humanitarian planning cycle, etc.) dominate cluster work, sometimes at the expense of more strategic work.

2 **The CLA role is not adequately valued or prioritized across the organization, particularly at the level of senior management, and CLA responsibilities are not sufficiently shared across UNICEF entities. CC positions are not sufficiently incentivized within UNICEF.**

There are at least six different entities within UNICEF that have a responsibility in fulfilling the CLA role. In practice, however, much of the CLA burden falls only on two of these entities: cluster coordinators (at global and country levels) and the global cluster coordination unit (GCCU). In other words, CLA responsibilities are left to the working level, with insufficient support from across the organization, resulting in inconsistency and unevenness in how the role is fulfilled, particularly at the country level.

The evidence encountered by the evaluation team would seem to suggest that reasons for this include the mindsets, culture and systems of UNICEF. The organization's incentives and appraisal systems reward staff for their achievements for the agency, instead of for the collective through clusters. While many UNICEF cluster coordinators have done a remarkable job, they often feel isolated in their roles. Clusters provide a unique 'selling' opportunity for UNICEF, which is too often overlooked or neglected by senior leadership or the broader organization. It would appear that UNICEF has not yet recognized that its work for children in humanitarian settings is more effective when carried out on behalf of, and together with, the collective of agencies.

3 UNICEF has not equally performed on the leadership responsibilities of its CLA role. Many co-leadership arrangements are not yet delivering on their potential.

The leadership role of the CLA should include:

■ Building a consensus among cluster partners around a shared vision and ways to collectively realize that vision;
■ Bringing the clusters and areas of responsibility (AoRs) closer together by working toward inter-sectoral connections and synergies; and
■ Sharing UNICEF's experiences and views on the cluster approach in humanitarian country teams (HCTs), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and with the wider humanitarian community.

While the evaluation noted a number of positive examples in this regard, UNICEF has generally underperformed in providing leadership across these three areas. A particular gap is in setting vision and strategy, a key leadership function. Day-to-day coordination duties, many of which are dictated by inter-agency processes and have expanded since the cluster approach began, dominate the workload, often at the expense of formulating meaningful strategies. Leadership also extends to deciding on the importance or relevance of certain tasks, and UNICEF and its cluster coordinators should not hesitate to prioritize in this way.

Among the positive examples encountered by the evaluation was the creation by the global nutrition cluster, under UNICEF leadership, of the cluster coordination competency framework, which was subsequently disseminated by the GCCU. The global water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster was also singled out in interviews as promoting a welcome approach to collective leadership.

4 The underlying tenets of the cluster approach – accountability, predictability and partnership – are inconsistently understood and applied.

The principle of **accountability**, in particular, is fraught with issues, best illustrated in the provider of last resort concept, which is understood and applied in many different ways within UNICEF. In some situations, it has been applied as the provider of 'first resort', with UNICEF taking on a large proportion of the delivery in a certain sector, while in others it has not been applied or its application is opaque. Without the relevant bodies, such as the HCT or IASC, asking for transparency and explanations, accountability remains elusive.

Predictability in the cluster approach has two aspects:
1) In the CLA's use of similar tools and processes in the clusters everywhere, which was generally found to be the case; and
2) Through the continued staffing of (dedicated) cluster coordinators and information managers. Gaps remain in this second aspect, sometimes for prolonged periods of time. UNICEF's standby partners may fill these gaps on a short-term basis, but this is not a sustainable solution.

Partnership is an area where UNICEF as CLA is perceived by stakeholders to be doing quite well. However, the organization has no systematic approach to partnership. Implementation of IASC guidance in this regard is inconsistent. In key informant interviews, the clusters were commended for their inclusiveness in terms of ensuring partnerships with local, national and international organizations. Cluster coordinators are seen as promoting and strengthening partnerships. As a result of the policy on localization and a commitment to strengthening partnerships, the number of national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the clusters has increased in many countries, especially in education and the child protection AoR. However, this partnership approach is often due to the individual efforts of cluster coordinators rather than the result of an institutional approach by the organization.

A particular challenge highlighted in interviews was that UNICEF is perceived as not understanding the power dynamics that arise from a 'donor' relationship when NGOs implement programmes with UNICEF funds. This has an impact in terms of how freely NGOs can engage in the cluster out of fear of funding-related repercussions.

5 As the agency leading/co-leading the greatest number of global clusters/AoR, UNICEF has not played a sufficiently proactive role in encouraging the IASC and the wider humanitarian community to review global policy and guidance on the cluster approach.

The CLA role also requires an approach that not only follows existing inter-agency guidance, but also actively initiates and contributes to ongoing strategic discussions within the IASC about the extent to which the cluster approach is still 'fit-for-purpose' and what modifications might be needed to improve performance. The IASC transformative agenda (2012) stated that the "clusters will be stripped back to become lean, effective and efficient coordination mechanisms focusing on delivery of results, rather than process". Nearly ten years later, it looks as if the clusters have gone some way in this direction, but they are far from "lean and streamlined". Process still dominates the work of the clusters, and as the United Nations agency with the most cluster lead responsibilities, UNICEF should have signalled this.

In its new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF notes that the focus will be shifted "beyond what the organization can do alone, toward using its mandate to mobilize other actors to maximize collective impact". The findings of this evaluation reaffirm the importance of this step, but also show that UNICEF still has some way to go toward achieving it. While parts of the agency, especially cluster coordinators, have adopted it, the culture of collective working is not yet institution-wide, and many systems and processes are still structured in terms of 'UNICEF first'. After more than fifteen years of leading or co-leading three global clusters and the child protection AoR, UNICEF has accrued a wealth of experience and lessons learned, and impressive progress has been made. The challenge going forward will be to further institutionalize the cluster lead agency role such that it is viewed as a core part of UNICEF business, in the spirit of maximizing collective results for children.

Recommendations

This evaluation generated three overarching recommendations and 12 sub-recommendations to address the underlying issues and challenges identified in the report. Since some of the findings of the CLARE II evaluation point to long-standing issues (raised over seven years ago by the CLARE I evaluation), the following recommendations also represent a second opportunity for UNICEF to tackle some of the outstanding obstacles that have hampered performance of the CLA role to the fullest:

1 | UNICEF should embrace, promote and operationalize the understanding that its work for children in humanitarian settings is even more effective when carried out on behalf of, and together with, the collective of actors. A change in approach is required for the organization to focus beyond what UNICEF can do alone, fostering a renewed recognition of the CLA role not as a mere 'add-on' but as a core imperative of UNICEF's mandate and an international commitment.

a. To further institutionalize the CLA role, UNICEF should ensure that key CLA functions, including cluster leadership positions such as cluster coordinators (CCs) and information management officers (IMOs), are covered from the **agency's core budget.**

b. UNICEF should also **clarify how it prioritizes its CLA role and responsibilities** amidst the myriad other priorities it has set, while further supporting the notion of '**inter-sectorality**' of the humanitarian response. The GCCU should continue to build on the role it has established over the years with a view to further promoting both UNICEF's CLA role and the notion of '**inter-sectorality**' of the humanitarian response.

c. UNICEF should **provide full transparency** to cluster partners about its efforts and intentions around **fundraising and funding for the clusters** when it has the **dual role** of being the CLA as well as providing financial resources as UNICEF to cluster partners, to avoid (or better manage) **perceived conflicts of interest**. Further, perceptions of uneven power dynamics should be addressed by reducing/limiting the frequency of **double-hatted CC positions** as well as clarifying and managing expectations of UNICEF programme specialists (on the CC's role in clusters) accordingly.

d. UNICEF should promote **strategic advisory groups (SAGs)** as platforms of collective leadership where issues such as **cluster vision and objectives** are openly discussed, defined and prioritized by cluster partners. The GCCU should regularly promote and disseminate the good practices that exist in relation to the effective functioning of SAGs.

e. UNICEF should **provide clear direction** on how the clusters it leads should implement and prioritize the **four policy commitments** (centrality of protection, AAP, HD nexus and localization) in addition to other institutional commitments such as those relating to disabilities and gender-based violence. UNICEF should ensure systematic dissemination of relevant guidance to all staff.

Responsible Office(s): EMOPS/GCCU; PG/DAPM, COs (including through RO and EMOPS support)

2 | In prioritizing its role for the collective of humanitarian actors, UNICEF should align internal systems with its CLA responsibilities, ensuring that these systems sufficiently recognize the central importance of the CLA role, and reflect the agency-wide accountability for the fulfilment of these responsibilities.

a. In reviewing the **accountability framework for humanitarian coordination, including information management**, UNICEF should ensure CLA accountability is systematically addressed as mandated by the CCCs, starting with a **compact** between UNICEF senior management, regional offices (ROs) and country offices (COs) that has **clear accountabilities** for humanitarian coordination, and **established metrics** for performance management for CLA staff at all levels (as part of key performance indicators and performance management systems).

i. Ensuring that the CLA responsibilities are part of line management and supervisory responsibilities, **UNICEF country representatives must be held accountable** by their supervisors (regional directors) for ensuring the key CLA positions are created and filled; supporting and supervising cluster coordinators; empowering them to provide leadership; and bringing cluster priorities to the HCT and other relevant inter-agency forums. Likewise, **regional directors should also report** on how they have worked with representatives in humanitarian countries and supported them to fulfil the CLA role.

ii. UNICEF should mainstream CLA responsibilities in **annual work plans and budgets, country programme documents** (and other relevant documents related to developing a new country programme) and **programme strategy notes, and CO performance management using the key performance indicators, monitoring and audit frameworks, job descriptions**, etc.

iii. UNICEF should also further invest systematically in **global-level analyses** of cluster performance (e.g. CCPM results).

b. **UNICEF human resource systems** must better support the CLA role to ensure that the right capacities are 'in the right place at the right time'.

i. In recognizing that the cluster coordinator is a key leadership position, UNICEF should ensure that a proper career path is established for the coordination function, to attract and retain talent. Conversely, those in (other) leadership positions such as programme section chiefs should fulfil a cluster coordination position as part of their career trajectories.

ii. UNICEF should **prioritize the calibre of staff** in cluster coordination positions, rather than over-relying on stand-by partners for **filling cluster (leadership) positions**. To support this, UNICEF should ensure that staff with CLA responsibilities are **prioritized in humanitarian learning and knowledge management trainings** to ensure they have adequate knowledge, skills and capacities to address the challenges that UNICEF experiences in CLA responsibilities and to support the creation of viable career pathways in coordination within UNICEF.

iii. UNICEF should prioritize emergency recruitment, establishing an **internal talent pool/ deployment roster** of properly trained professionals in cluster coordination, available to be deployed fast on surge to fill gaps.

iv. To help make a significant step forward in effective recruitment of CC and IM positions, UNICEF should also further promote the **GNC, GEC, GCP AoR and GWC competency frameworks for cluster coordination and information management.**

v. UNICEF should prioritize investment and support to **building national capacities for leadership and coordination in humanitarian situations**, as relevant.

vi. UNICEF should strengthen its **capacities to more systematically track and monitor** resources (human resources/staffing and funding) provided to cluster coordination work.

Responsible Office(s): EMOPS/GCCU; PD; DHR, DAPM, ROs, COs (including through RO and EMOPS support)

3 | **To strengthen accountability and learning, UNICEF should use the knowledge and experience it has gained as CLA, and from evaluations such as this one, to push for a reflection** on how clusters can be adapted to the changing context in which humanitarian response takes place, and **lead changes in the IASC to clarify the underlying tenets of the cluster approach.**

a. UNICEF should **advocate for cluster guidance to be updated** and cluster coordination processes to be **streamlined**, and where possible rationalized, as part of an IASC reflection on the clusters and their future. This **recalibration**, which is critical to better serve affected populations, includes ensuring a balance between coordination activities and leadership, while moving away from time-consuming processes which have ultimately detracted from leading the cluster strategically and realizing collective leadership. UNICEF should play a leadership role in any updating efforts undertaken by the IASC, given its (co-) CLA experience.

b. To ensure that clusters can adequately respond to the growth and complexity of humanitarian needs, UNICEF should continue to systematically advocate within the IASC for **multi-year planning/funding for HNO/HRPs**, strengthening **monitoring of needs** and programme interventions, including of both coverage and **quality**; and addressing issues of **deactivation and transition of clusters** (e.g. developing guidelines and/or note on transition).

c. The Executive Director of UNICEF should **report at least once a year** on the way UNICEF is delivering on its CLA responsibilities, including accountability for senior leaders for supporting the clusters, at the IASC principals meeting and to the UNICEF Executive Board. When relevant, the Executive Director/Deputy Executive Director/Director of Emergency Programmes should also **propose adjustments or new ideas** related to the CLA role based on UNICEF's experiences. Through this engagement, UNICEF will also be setting an example, which principals of other agencies that hold CLA roles might follow.

d. UNICEF should **advocate for the clarification of co-leadership** by the IASC, with a view to achieving a stronger definition of the function and its implications, especially in terms of accountabilities (e.g. staffing/provider of last resort).

e. UNICEF should advocate for the IASC to review the concept of **provider of last resort** with a view to making it more transparent and ensuring it is more consistently applied (or rejected); currently, it obscures accountability more than it strengthens the concept.

Responsible Office(s): EMOPS; Executive Office; PPD

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations	**FGD**	Focus Group Discussion
AoR	Area of Responsibility	**FTS**	Financial Tracking Service
CC	Cluster Coordinator	**GCCU**	Global Cluster Coordination Unit
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action	**GEC**	Global Education Cluster
CCPM	Cluster Coordination Performance \ Monitoring	**GNC**	Global Nutrition Cluster
		GWC	Global WASH Cluster
CLA	Cluster (co-)Lead Agency	**HAC**	Humanitarian Action for Children
CLARE	Evaluation of UNICEF Cluster Lead Agency role in Humanitarian Action	**HC**	Humanitarian Coordinator
		HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
CO	Country Office	**HDN**	Humanitarian-Development Nexus
CoP	Centrality of Protection	**HPC**	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019	**HRP**	Humanitarian Response Plan
CP	Child Protection	**IASC**	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
DHR	Division of Human Resources	**ICRC**	International Committee of the Red Cross
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	**IMO**	Information Managemen Officer
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General	**IOM**	International Organization for Migration
EC-WG	Executive Council – Working Group	**INGO**	International Non-Governmental Organisation
EDG	Emergency Directors Group	**IRB**	Institutional Review Board
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes	**ISF**	Integrated Strategic Framework
EO	Evaluation Office	**KII**	Key Informant interviews
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator	**MoU**	Memorandum of Understanding

MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian
PD	Programme Division
PFP	Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division
POLR	Provider of Last Resort
PoP	Principles of Partnership
RC	Resident Coordinator
RO	Regional Office
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SD	Supply Division
TA	Transformative Agenda
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
4W (5W)	Who is doing What, Where, and When (and for Whom)

1. INTRODUCTION

The cluster approach was conceived within the broader framework of the humanitarian reform initiative undertaken by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2005. By strengthening partnerships in several key sectors of humanitarian response – or "clusters", as they became known – the approach aimed to improve predictability, response capacity, coordination and accountability in humanitarian response.

Leadership of each cluster was formalized and taken on by particular agencies/organizations. UNICEF was designated as cluster lead agency (CLA) of the nutrition cluster and the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster, and was designated co-lead agency, with Save the Children, of the education cluster, as well as focal point agency for the child protection area of responsibility (CP AoR) under the protection cluster.[3]

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3   The AoR focal point agency role entails the same accountabilities as the CLA role. In this report, the abbreviation "CLA" refers to the role UNICEF plays as CLA of the WASH and nutrition clusters, as co-CLA of the education cluster, and as focal point agency of the child protection AoR.

A first global evaluation of UNICEF's CLA role in humanitarian action ("CLARE I") was undertaken in 2013. The evaluation concluded that overall, UNICEF had invested significantly in implementing its CLA role, with positive results.[4] Progress has also been highlighted in several other evaluations, reviews and evaluative exercises undertaken over the years.

In 2013, CLARE I cautioned against what it saw as cluster 'scope creep'. It found that the proliferation of contexts in which the cluster approach was being implemented, compounded by the extended activation timelines of clusters, limited UNICEF's ability to carry out its CLA role, resulting in efforts and resources being spread more thinly. Since then, UNICEF's humanitarian funding requirements have increased significantly: between 2014 and 2018, funding requirements through the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal grew by over 70 percent.[5] In 2020, the humanitarian funding requirement increased to US $6,315 million, representing the largest-ever funding request for humanitarian action by UNICEF.[6] Still, resources remain thin in relation to needs.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic compounded this situation, arriving at a time when humanitarian needs were already high.

The longer-term impacts of COVID-19 may be even greater in terms of food security, educational opportunities and livelihoods. At the same time, the economic impacts of the pandemic may result in a significant decline in humanitarian funding; as a result, the gap between needs and available humanitarian response capacity risks expanding further. It goes without saying that this gap will have implications for the clusters and how they are led. The UNICEF Evaluation Office commissioned this second CLARE evaluation - CLARE II - as COVID-19 was just starting to affect lives across the world. A 'COVID-19 lens' was incorporated into the design of the evaluation to ensure that its purpose and objectives remained relevant and could generate highly useful evidence in both the current context and the 'post-COVID-19 world'.

1.1   Purpose and Scope

Accountability is a key aspect of the cluster approach. The designation of sector-specific formal lead agencies is significant, especially when gaps in delivery can be found. In this light, UNICEF should be commended for being one of the few United Nations agencies that undertakes regular evaluations of how well it performs its CLA role. It is indeed for reasons of accountability that this evaluation reviews

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4   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action', UNICEF, New York, 2013.

5   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report, 2018', UNICEF, New York, 2019; and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Humanitarian Action for Children', 2014-2019, UNICEF, New York. See also the Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

6   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Annual Report, 2020', UNICEF, New York, 2021, p.34.

and reflects on UNICEF experiences as CLA over the last seven years, assessing progress made. In addition to this summative purpose, the evaluation also includes a formative one, in that it looks forward and provides suggestions as to what can be done to confront the challenges identified. Ultimately, the purpose of the evaluation is to equip UNICEF with the evidence it needs to exercise high-quality cluster leadership in all its aspects.

As per the terms of reference (see Annex 3), the evaluation objective is to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness and coherence/connectedness of UNICEF's CLA role in the period since the first CLARE evaluation in 2013, with special attention to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope has been framed around the following key points:

• Coordination and leadership

While CLARE I approached UNICEF's CLA role mainly from the angle of coordination responsibilities (divided into internal and external coordination), this evaluation takes account of the fact that UNICEF, in its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs), sees the CLA function as including both a coordination and a leadership component.[7] Given that the cluster approach places significant emphasis on strengthened partnerships, the evaluation also looks at this angle, including in terms of collective leadership. The evaluation approached "leadership" as a collective effort. Indeed, each cluster partner[8] should feel encouraged, and even morally responsible, to propose solutions and suggest directions.

• COVID-19 and cross-cutting commitments

The pandemic prompted the evaluation to reflect further on the ways in which UNICEF, as CLA, can promote improvements to the work of the clusters and, ultimately, to humanitarian effectiveness, including through reform issues such as accountability to affected populations (AAP), the localization agenda and the humanitarian-development nexus (nexus or HD nexus)[9] in an emergency response, alongside

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7   ALNAP defines leadership as: "Providing a clear vision and objectives for the humanitarian response; building a consensus that brings aid workers together around that vision and objectives; and finding ways of collectively realizing the vision for the benefit of the affected population, often in challenging and hostile environments." See Paul Knox-Clarke, 'Who's in Charge Here?: A literature review of approaches to leadership in humanitarian operations', ALNAP working paper, ALNAP, London, 2013. Reportedly, UNICEF uses a definition of leadership that includes aspects such as inspiring people, empowering people (including affected populations), promoting principles and care and being proactive and adaptive to change.

8   Throughout the report, cluster "partner" refers to anyone participating in a cluster/sub-cluster/AoR.

9   UNICEF documents refer to the humanitarian-development nexus. They do not cover the triple nexus: humanitarian-development-peace. In 2019, UNICEF published the "Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development", which is also referred to in the 2020 revised CCCs. A recent evaluation has found that UNICEF's overall approach to the humanitarian, development and peace nexus neglects the peacebuilding dimension. See United Nations Children's Fund, 'Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming', UNICEF, New York, 2021.

other commitments such as the centrality of protection. Cross-cutting issues such as these require additional efforts in terms of leadership and were therefore used as relevant proxies for assessing leadership efforts.

- **The interface between UNICEF as an institution and the cluster**

By definition, the evaluation touches on UNICEF's humanitarian mandate and the question of how its CLA responsibilities contribute to fulfilling this mandate. This raises the issue of the interface between UNICEF as an institution and as a cluster lead (also a major theme of CLARE I). The goals and mandate of UNICEF will be better supported when it performs well at the collective level, in partnership with other partners involved in the clusters. It is in this vein that the evaluation also gives attention to UNICEF's approach to leadership and the investments it has made in leadership development for cluster coordinators.

- **CLA performance versus cluster performance**

Assessing the impact of leadership on cluster performance involved looking at perceptions and other evidence that suggests a possible link between leadership and the work of the clusters, but did not extend to reviewing and evaluating the work of the cluster *per se*. Such a focus would require covering a range of other variables that influence cluster performance (e.g. context, humanitarian space, access, security, etc.), and are outside the scope of the evaluation.

- **An equal consideration of education, child protection, nutrition and WASH**

Importantly, this evaluation looked at the four UNICEF (co-)led clusters/AoR with equal interest; none was considered more important than another. That said, following a request

from the global education cluster (GEC), a parallel review has been undertaken of the co-leadership arrangement of the GEC. Given the significant similarities and overlap, and for efficiency reasons, this CLARE II evaluation and the GEC co-leadership review were implemented in tandem, particularly during the data-collection phase. As a result, the number of respondents involved with the education sector is slightly higher than that from other clusters/AoR. This difference has been borne in mind in the analysis, as appropriate, and separate reports have been produced for the two exercises.

- **Global, regional and country levels**

This evaluation investigated how UNICEF carries out its CLA role at the global, regional and country levels. At the global level, the evaluation assessed UNICEF's role in leading the global clusters in setting policy, standards and guidelines; building response capacity; providing operational support;[10] and ensuring synergies with other (global) clusters and inter-cluster collaboration through the global cluster coordination group. At the country level, and taking a particular look at eight country contexts (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sudan),[11] the evaluation considered how UNICEF has carried out its CLA responsibilities to support service delivery; informing the Humanitarian Coordinator/ humanitarian country team strategic decision-making; planning and implementation of cluster strategies; monitoring and evaluation of performance; contingency planning and robust advocacy. Consideration was also given to how country-level cluster leadership perceives the support received from UNICEF regional offices (ROs) and country offices (COs) as well as UNICEF programme staff at headquarters (HQ).

The specific countries to be considered were chosen by the evaluation management group, with advice from the evaluation reference group, as per Table 1. Several criteria were developed by the evaluation team during the inception phase to help guide the considerations in choosing the countries.[12] The final selection, made by the management group, took into consideration the requirements of the GEC co-leadership review carried out in parallel to this evaluation, as well as other ongoing evaluations, reviews and demands on countries.

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10   Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response', IASC, Geneva, 2006.

11   Afghanistan was among the country contexts to be considered initially. However, during the data collection it appeared that another UNICEF-commissioned evaluation was taking place in the country, and although that evaluation did not look at UNICEF's role in the clusters specifically, it did cover some of the same issues. The CLARE II evaluation consulted with the team leader of that evaluation (led by Itad) and also received input from Afghanistan-based cluster coordinators and partners who completed the survey (see Table 2.2 in Annex 2 for a list).

12   Please see Annex 2 for details on the criteria for country selection.

TABLE 1
Selection of country contexts for review

Countries for review	Key selection criteria
Sahel: Burkina Faso and Mali	Sub-regional crisis; mixed setting; well established clusters; integrated United Nations presence (Mali)
DRC	Public health emergency; sub-national coordination
Ethiopia	Cluster lead following consultation with government
Nigeria	Sub-national coordination
South Sudan	Integrated United Nations presence
Mozambique	Thematic approach; emerging crisis
Sudan	Cluster lead following consultation with government
Afghanistan	Cluster activated and deactivated. Protracted crisis; sub-national coordination. Integrated United Nations presence

1.2 Analytical Framework and Evaluation Matrix

A description of UNICEF's role as CLA appears in the organization's CCCs:

> Support the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles.[14]

In line with this definition, the evaluation team separated CLA responsibilities into two broad but interlinked categories: coordination and leadership. While coordination by nature involves a set of practical activities that can be shared or delegated relatively easily, leadership is a more intangible responsibility, of which the CLA cannot divest itself.

The evaluation design was informed by a basic logic model (Figure 1), which emphasizes the internal and external areas deemed particularly

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14   See United Nations Children's Fund, 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action', UNICEF, New York, 2020, paragraph 2.1.2.

relevant. The model presents the main causal pathways underlying UNICEF's engagement as CLA, indicated by green arrows. The light grey field illustrates the scope of the evaluation, meaning that the evaluation looked at how UNICEF works as CLA, rather than at the extent to which UNICEF-led clusters have carried out their responsibilities more broadly. The summative angle included assessing the way in which UNICEF has carried out its CLA role in practice and the progress made since 2013. Progress was assessed against the tenets of the cluster approach, namely: predictability, accountability and partnership.[15] In addition, the commitments made at the time of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and/or in line with the Grand Bargain were taken into account, as well as the CLARE I recommendations. Given that the CLA role includes responsibilities specifically related to leadership as well as coordination, and with a view to formatively

drawing lessons for UNICEF to be better equipped to exercise systematic, high-quality cluster (co)-leadership, the evaluation also considered a set of benchmarks specifically linked to leadership styles.[16]

In light of this logic model, the evaluation team reformulated and refined a number of the key evaluation questions provided by the terms of reference against the criteria of relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness and coherence/connectedness.[17]

The adjusted questions are set out in Table 2. They are further detailed in the evaluation matrix (Annex 1). Unless specifically stated, these key evaluation questions were used to examine both the global and country levels.

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15 According to the IASC, the aim of the cluster approach is "to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response. At country level, it aims to strengthen partnerships, and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations." Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'What is the Cluster Approach', IASC, Geneva, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach. For the purposes of this evaluation, 'predictability' includes ensuring a clear prioritization of activities and working to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various actors. It also includes the associated implications when various stakeholders understand the commitment to predictability differently. 'Accountability' in this evaluation also includes looking at whether roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, as well as the extent to which UNICEF as CLA facilitates cluster accountability exercises such as peer review, self-reporting or evaluation. With regard to 'partnership', the evaluation considers the extent to which UNICEF as CLA has made efforts to empower cluster partners and develop a collective orientation in accordance with the principles of partnership. See questions 8, 9, and 10 of the evaluation matrix in Annex 1 for more details.

16 The leadership benchmarks in the logic model have been derived from the "Denison 360 leadership development" model, which looks at leadership behaviours (see https://www.denisonconsulting.com/denison-leadership-development-360/).

17 It was decided in the inception phase not to include the criteria of efficiency and coverage, which would have required a more direct investigation of the performance of the clusters per se, especially at the country level. This approach would have gone beyond the objective and purpose of an evaluation that is focused on the role of UNICEF as CLA.

FIGURE 1
Evaluation logic model

Cluster responsibilities

- Consolidated policies, standards, and guidelines
- Response capacity built up
- Operational support provided
- Coordination mechanisms support service delivery
- HC/HCTs strategic decision-making is informed
- Cluster strategies are planned and implemented
- Performance is monitored and evaluated
- Contingency planning/ preparedness/national capacity-building in place
- Advocacy on behalf of cluster is carried out

CLA role

Support the **leadership and coordination** of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles

Areas for analysis (influencing/influenced by CLA role)

Internal factors
- Internal CLA management processes/ resources
- Relationship with (cluster) partners
- Balancing of institution v. cluster priorities

External factors
- IASC/ other clusters
- The Grand Bargain
- Crisis-specific contextual elements/ COVID-19

Evaluation scope: UNICEF as CLA

Key components of the CLA role

Coordination
- Systematic high-quality cluster (co-)leadership in technical and coordination aspects

Leadership
- Mission (goal, vision); Adaptability (collective learning); Engagement (empowerment, collective orientation); Consistency (coordination with other clusters)

The tenets of the cluster approach
- Predictability (clear priortization, definition of roles and responsibilities)
- Accountabilitiy (facilitation of accountability exercises, reporting mechanisms, etc)
- Partnership (Principles of Partnership)

TABLE 2
Key evaluation questions

Key Evaluation Questions
1. Is UNICEF fulfilling its CLA responsibilities in line with the principles/standards/roles of the cluster approach?
2. Is UNICEF's CLA role aligned with the coordination and response needs of country level clusters and/or other relevant coordination bodies?
3. How does UNICEF conceive of its leadership role?
4. Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitments to localization, AAP, the HD nexus, centrality of protection?
5. Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to collectively understand and develop cluster responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in line with humanitarian standards and principles?
6. Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?
7. Is UNICEF as CLA promoting innovative approaches and initiatives?
8. Has UNICEF as the CLA taken steps to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit-for-purpose in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space)?
9. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in emergency response?
10. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater accountability in emergency response?
11. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to strengthened partnership in emergency response?
12. Has UNICEF lead on advocacy efforts in line with its CLA responsibilities?
13. When/where has the provider of last resort concept been invoked and what happened?
14. What leadership role is UNICEF as CLA playing on the issue of funding for the clusters?
15. Has UNICEF as CLA encouraged linkages with other clusters, other relevant initiatives, and other partners?
16. What efforts have been made by the CLA to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?

1.3   From CLARE I to CLARE II

While this evaluation 'picks up' where CLARE I left off, it is important to highlight the difference in focus between the two evaluations. The former started from a UNICEF-centred approach to the CLA role. Distinguishing between internal and external coordination, the analysis focuses on the UNICEF-led clusters themselves and their work. What CLARE I terms 'internal coordination' is considered by this evaluation as internal leadership and management. Rather than distinguishing between internal and external commitments,

CLARE II starts from the perspective that what UNICEF does for the collective is crucial to achieving its mandate, and thus needs to be an integral part of its institutional mindset, policies and frameworks.

Figure 2 indicates the relationship between the two evaluations by juxtaposing the main sections of each final report and indicating how they overlap. Importantly, in the sections where there is overlap, it is possible to make more direct comparisons. Where this is the case, mention is given of achievements made since 2013 by recalling findings from CLARE I.

FIGURE 2
Areas of overlap between CLARE I and CLARE II

CLARE I				
EXTERNAL COORDINATION	**INTERNAL COORDINATION**	**COST EFFECTIVENESS**	**HUMAN RESOURCES**	**SCOPE & BOUNDARY**
Coverage	Establishment GCCU	Value for money	Recruitment systems	Operational role of UNICEF clusters
Overall effectiveness	Role of regional offices		Surge capacity	
	Comparative advantage			
Partnership	Policy & performance	Linkages with others initiatives		Scope of UNICEF cluster responsibilities
		Co-leadership arrangement		
The CLA's coordination responsibilities	Where does CLA leadership sit Leadership & cluster strategy Other leadership achievements			Accountability Predictability Provider of Last Resort
THE CLA'S COORDINATION ROLE	**THE CLA'S LEADERSHIP ROLE**			**THE CLA & THE TENETS OF THE CLUSTER APPROACH**
CLARE II				

In principle, it should be possible to use the CLARE I evaluation as a baseline to assess UNICEF's achievements since 2013. The reality, however, is more complicated. The actions UNICEF has taken in response to the CLARE I recommendations have not occurred in a vacuum; the context has evolved considerably over the past several years.

Table 3 provides an overview of the key recommendations from CLARE I. Annex 4 provides an overview of how the CLARE I recommendations relate to CLARE II and its findings.

CLARE I Recommendations (2013)	
1. External coordination performance: Develop a "cluster-ready" initiative to increase country office preparedness for cluster activation in high-risk countries.	This recommendation is meant to increase understanding of country offices, improve contingency planning with partners in high-risk countries and better enable the GCCU to predict surge capacity demands.
2. Internal CLA performance: Strengthen UNICEF-wide management systems to support the CLA role, including strengthening the role of regional offices and better connecting country representatives to a global CLA strategic management structure.	This recommendation is meant to increase coherence and consistency, improve performance management and monitoring and improve cross-divisional coordination support.
3. Human resources performance: Develop an integrated strategy for human resources surge capacity and UNICEF coordination staff development.	This recommendation is meant to improve targeted training of coordinators, further increase the ability to deploy the right staff rapidly, and improve the quality of coordination staff.
4. Scope and boundary issues: Increase coherence (interpretation and articulation) and then fidelity (understanding and consistent application) through UNICEF CLA policy and practice.	This recommendation is meant to focus GCCU operational support on the most relevant emergency situations and help manage stakeholder expectations.
5. Cost-effectiveness, value for money and efficiency: Mitigate the use of clusters in inappropriate scenarios by developing models and tools for non-cluster coordination, including transition points for country offices, and establish clarity on the role of clusters, if any, for national capacity-building to ensure efficient and fit-for-purpose coordination approaches.	This recommendation is meant to help maintain partner satisfaction with UNICEF coordination leadership, improve transition to and from sectoral development and humanitarian coordination mechanisms and help avoid duplication with other disaster preparedness and risk reduction actors.

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18   Excerpt from CLARE I, p.53

Notably, a major change took place in the country-based cluster processes and tools as a result of the transformative agenda, a set of actions agreed to by the IASC principals in December 2011. At the time CLARE I was underway, the transformative agenda was in the early stages of being operationalized; as such the report contained one scant reference to the "transformative agenda integrated programme cycle" and noted that the tools had yet to be tested.[19] In the years following CLARE I, however, the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) methodology began to dominate the work of country-based clusters.

A second set of reforms came in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 and the resulting "Grand Bargain". This process saw the adoption of a number of commitments, especially in the areas of accountability to affected populations, cash as the preferred modality for delivery of assistance, diversity, equity and inclusion, the central role of local actors, and the linkage between relief and development (and peace). While some of these commitments were not strictly new, prior to 2016 they had often been vaguely articulated, and accountability for implementing them unclear. In the wake of the Grand Bargain, operationalizing many of them became the responsibility of the clusters, adding to the volume and complexity of their work. CLARE I covers some problems around consistency and coherence of UNICEF CLA policy and practice, but this is minimal compared to the issues seen in this regard by this evaluation.

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19   CLARE I, p.42.

1.4   Methods and Data Collection

In line with the objectives and criteria in the terms of reference, the CLARE II evaluation made use of a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from global, regional and country levels.

Due to restrictions in movement linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team used virtual data-collection tools.[20] They included remote semi-structured interviews with key informants, an online survey among UNICEF's cluster partners and cluster coordinators, and a focus group discussion with members of the evaluation reference group to validate specific findings. Primary data collected through these methods were triangulated with the findings from a systematic document review and subsequent analysis.

The focus of the evaluation was on qualitative data, for two reasons. First, the question of how UNICEF carries out its CLA role is one that is highly qualitative in nature. As will be discussed below, the CLA role involves more than producing tools and figures, and as such, a true assessment of how the role is carried out requires consideration of the perceptions of all stakeholders, along with qualitative evaluative judgement. Second, the quantitative data available are mainly linked to capacity/resources. While they do give some important indications with regard to certain aspects, it is often highly context-specific, and cannot easily be aggregated for a useful overview.

An overview of the process and methods for data collection and analysis can be found in Figure 3, with a more detailed account given in Annex 2.

In total, counting all responses to the survey (including partial ones) and interviews, the data collection reached approximately 1,100 people (including through 314 key informant interviews, as well as 428 full and 802 partial survey responses),[21] distributed as per Figure 4. It should be noted that the comparatively higher participation of education stakeholders is linked to the fact that CLARE II was, as noted above, carried out in parallel with a review of the GEC co-leadership arrangement, which targeted a slightly larger number of education cluster staff.

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20   The option to recruit national consultants for country-level data collection was not pursued due to delays in the identification of specific countries for study.

21   The partial responses were not used for the statistical analysis (as there would be no way of knowing if the "no answer" was a voluntary choice or just an unfinished survey), but where written comments to questions had been provided these were considered by the evaluators.

FIGURE 3
Overview of CLARE II process

INCEPTION PHASE

OBJECTIVE
• Assess the relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, and coherence/connectedness of how UNICEF carries out the (co-)CLA role

JUNE 2020

APPROACH
• Leadership approached as a collective effort
• Definition of 16 specific evaluation questions
• Research at global, regional, and country levels
• Remote data collection, due to COVID-19 resrictions

SEP. 2020

DATA COLLECTION PHASE

DOCUMENT REVIEW
• Systematic review of approx. 150 documents

OCT. 2020

ONLINE SURVEY
• In Arabic, English, French, and Spanish
• Shared in UNICEF (co)-led clusters in 29 country contexts and at regional and global level
• 428 full responses

NOV. 2020 - APRIL 2021

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS
• 88 global and regional stakeholders
• 33% UNICEF, 32% INGO, 5% NNGO, 7% donor, 2% government, and 23% other (UN agencies, ICRC, academia)

JAN. JUNE 2021

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS
• 226 country-level informants from Burkina Faso, DRC, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan & Sudan
• 24% UNICEF, 34% INGO, 19% NNGO, 7% donor, 3% gvt, and 13% other (UN agencies, ICRC, academia)

22 FEB - 10 MAY 2021

MARCH 2021

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
• Session on the subject of "cluster (co-)leadership with members of the reference group

CONSOLIDATION PHASE

DRAFT REPORT
• Workshop with reference group to discuss draft report before comments/finalization

JAN. JUNE 2021

ANALYSIS
• Coding of interview notes, using MAX-QDA software
• Regular exchanges within evaluation team to anchor findings and ensure coherence in approach

FINAL REPORT
• Conclusions re how UNICEF is carrying out the (co-)CLA role;
• Recommendations linked to identified; best practice and weaknesses;

JUNE 2021

SEP. 2021

DISSEMINATION
• Findings shared with key stakeholders for uptake and learning

FIGURE 4

Overview of informants per type and cluster

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES

26% UNICEF

33% INGO

15% NNGO

7% Donor

3% Government

16% Other (UN Agencies, ICRC, academia...)

Global level: 26%
Country level: 72%
Regional level: 2%

15% Intersector

19% WASH

19% Nutrition

28% Education

20% Child Protection

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

11% Not specified

34% WASH

25% Nutrition

54% Education

36% Child Protection
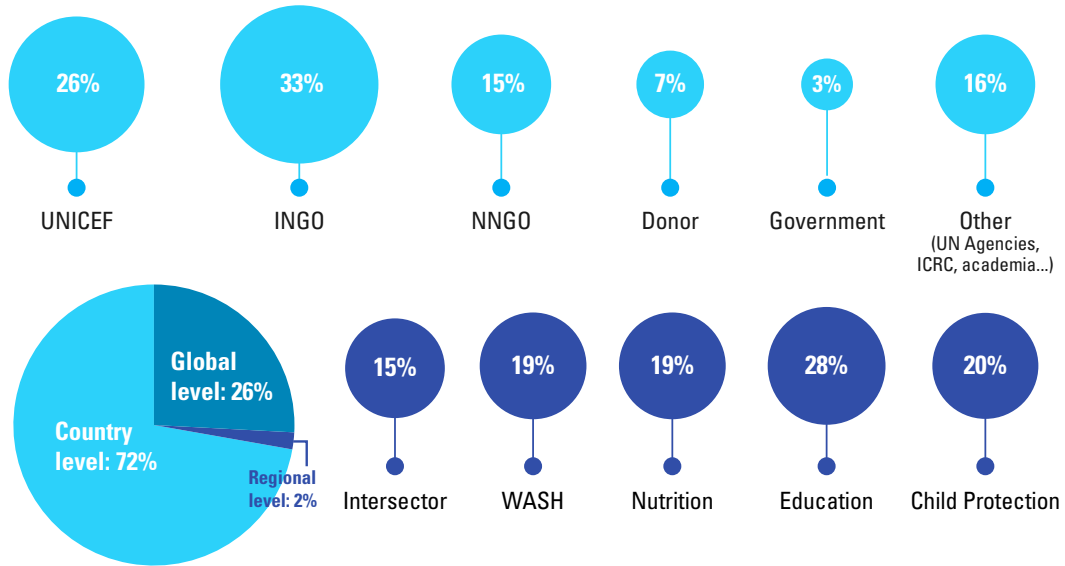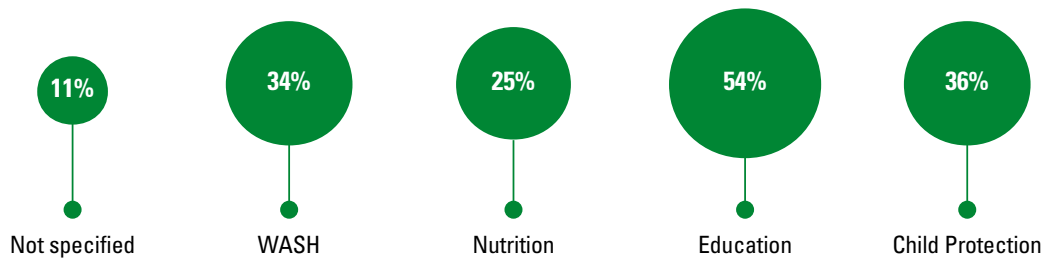
The total percentages of survey respondents add up to 160% because several respondents indicated involvement in more than one cluster

Global level: 3%
Regional level: 5%
Country level: 92%

29% Cluster Lead/ Coordinator

60% Cluster Partner

11% Others
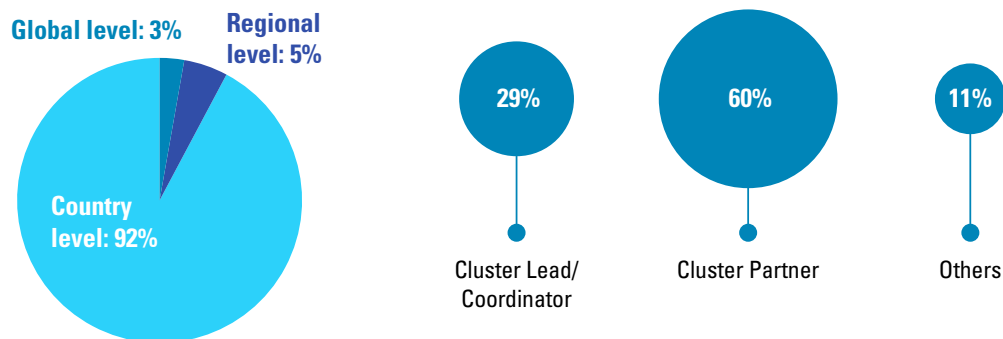
1.5   Limitations

As with any exercise of this kind, a number of limitations should be noted, the most significant of which are linked to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting significant travel restrictions and disruptions. While the requirement to do all interviews remotely made it possible to approach the global and country-level data-collection in parallel, without need to account for travel time, it nonetheless resulted in a longer, and more cumbersome, data collection phase than anticipated. This limitation was, on the one hand, due to internet connectivity problems in certain contexts, but more importantly, a general lack of responsiveness from participants, who were slow in responding to emails and frequently did not attend meetings that had been set. The evaluation team saw this challenge as a sign of significant electronic/video-conference/ evaluation-fatigue.

The terms of reference for this evaluation, following from where CLARE I left off, called for breadth rather than depth in terms of the evaluation scope. The evaluation team was asked to consider insights from the four UNICEF-led clusters/sub-clusters in eight different country contexts. To adequately ensure representativity of key informants from each cluster/context, the evaluation team therefore had to approach a very large number of interviewees. At the same time, the topics broached were relatively broad and the interviews quickly provided a pattern for analysis. In short, the team would likely have reached the same conclusions based on a much

smaller number of interviews. However, the time and effort taken to ensure very thorough data collection has the advantage of anchoring the findings well in the eight very different country contexts considered. Moreover, the broad participation in the evaluation process by both UNICEF and external stakeholders is beneficial in terms of building engagement and ownership of the outcomes, something that is particularly important in view of the formative purpose of the exercise.

It should also be noted that, similar to the CLARE I evaluation seven years ago, the evaluation team encountered an inconsistent understanding among both internal and external stakeholders as to what the CLA role involves, making it difficult to answer all the evaluation questions consistently. In the interviews, key informants prioritized the issues they saw as relevant to their participation in the cluster, or with which they were more familiar. Often, they did not distinguish between UNICEF as a CLA or UNICEF as an operational agency, or the role and work of the cluster per se. Comments made by respondents to the survey often indicated a similarly inconsistent approach to certain key concepts around the CLA role. This fact has been considered in the analysis as appropriate.

The documentation provided to the evaluation team by UNICEF's global clusters and the global cluster coordination unit (GCCU) varied in terms of quantity and coverage between clusters, making it difficult to compare different elements or themes or look at issues quantitatively in a comprehensive manner. In

some cases, the documents received were outdated.

The need to consider several criteria in choosing the countries both for this evaluation and the GEC co-leadership review, in tandem with the aim of ensuring criteria that inform both the summative and formative parts of the exercises, proved difficult. The final list of countries chosen by the management group does not reflect a geographical balance, consisting almost entirely of African countries (the sole exception being Afghanistan). This limitation is important to consider, particularly as another evaluation was being carried out in Afghanistan at the same time, and as such the evaluation team did not conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) with colleagues in Afghanistan. Clusters there did receive the survey, and this goes some way toward mitigating the limitation, though there tended to be larger numbers of respondents from the countries that were also part of the KIIs.

As noted above, the temporal scope picks up where CLARE I left off in 2013. Due to a high turnover among staff (as an indication, close to 60 per cent of survey respondents noted being involved with their current cluster for less than three years) and the fact that key informants tended to have a better recollection of the last few years, the very recent and current perspective has dominated the insights given. This limitation means that the summative perspective of the evaluation does not give an even overview of the evolution over the past seven years. However, the focus on where issues currently stand provides a clear direction in terms of moving forward.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the evaluation process, close attention was given to ethical considerations, in line with the ethical guidelines of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and UNICEF and the principle of 'do no harm'.[22] No meetings with children/adolescents were held as part of this evaluation, as data were collected from among clusters and not beneficiaries.

In order to address the sensitive nature of some of the discussions held, particularly since the data collection was carried out remotely, special confidentiality and information security measures were put in place to ensure the trust of the respondents in the interview and survey process. The evaluation team shared a note explaining confidentiality and data protection measures ahead of every interview, and also began each meeting with a further explanation, specifically asking for the informed consent of each interviewee before going ahead with questions. Interview subjects were also given the option to suspend the interview or opt out of specific questions for any reason. Interviews were not carried out for attribution and specific individuals are not named. No remote

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22   For example, the guidelines endorsed by UNICEF's Office of Research: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/706/.

interviews were recorded. The evaluation team kept written and digital records of the interviews to ensure accuracy and enable systematic analysis. Notes were not shared outside the evaluation team.

The online survey was anonymous in all respects, with no possibility of identifying participants by name, location, or IP address. Responses were aggregated with those of others to help inform country-level and global analysis. Respondents were given the possibility to skip any question, save the survey on their browser and come back to it later, or stop the survey at any time before completion. Participants were informed of these conditions in the e-mail disseminating the survey link, as well as on the first page of the survey. In order to participate, they had to specifically click to give consent to participating in the survey based on the above conditions, before continuing to the survey questions.

The approach and data-collection tools were assessed through a research ethics review by Health Media Lab Institutional Review Board, and a formal ethics approval was provided prior to the implementation phase of the evaluation.

1.7   Audience

The evaluation and its findings are intended to:

1. Provide UNICEF and partners with a consolidated picture of the progress made since CLARE I.

2. Contribute to UNICEF planning and internal change processes.

3. Provide UNICEF leadership with suggestions on how to improve the organization's leadership of the clusters/AoR.[23]

4. Inform UNICEF's work at the IASC and other forums on the future of the clusters and humanitarian partnerships.

The following stakeholders are considered as the target audiences for this evaluation:

- UNICEF global cluster coordinators; co-lead agencies; strategic advisory groups; cluster members and partners;

- The UNICEF global cluster coordination unit;

- The IASC, global cluster coordination group and other global clusters;

- Other cluster lead agencies;

- UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes leadership and teams;

- UNICEF Programme Division and other relevant divisions, in particular the Division of Human Resources; Supply Division;

- Private Fundraising and Partnerships; and others as appropriate;

- UNICEF regional directors and regional emergency advisors;

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23   Where we refer to the "clusters" for purposes of brevity in the report, the child protection AoR is also included. In some instances the report refers without specific distinction to "area of responsibility"/"AoR" and "sub-cluster".

- UNICEF representatives in country offices and chiefs of sections;
- Cluster coordinators in-country.
- Donors; and
- Governments of countries where clusters are in place or being considered.

1.8   Structure of the Report

This report does not specifically separate between summative and formative analysis and findings, nor is it structured to systematically respond to each evaluation question or area of inquiry in turn. Instead, to avoid overlaps and ensure a logical and comprehensive overview, the report is structured thematically to unpack findings along the main lines of analysis. It will therefore look first at how UNICEF as CLA carries out its coordination role (section 2) and its leadership role (section 3). Section 4 will explore elements linked to accountability, predictability and partnership of the emergency response, including the provider of last resort concept, before reaching the conclusions and recommendations. For ease of reading, and to provide clear linkages to the evaluation questions, the specific evaluation questions touched upon within each section are indicated in textboxes throughout the report.

Before delving into the analysis, it should be noted that to ensure the anonymity of respondents, examples from specific country contexts and clusters have been anonymized where possible. In some cases, where obvious in view of the nature of the example provided, the name of the cluster has been included.
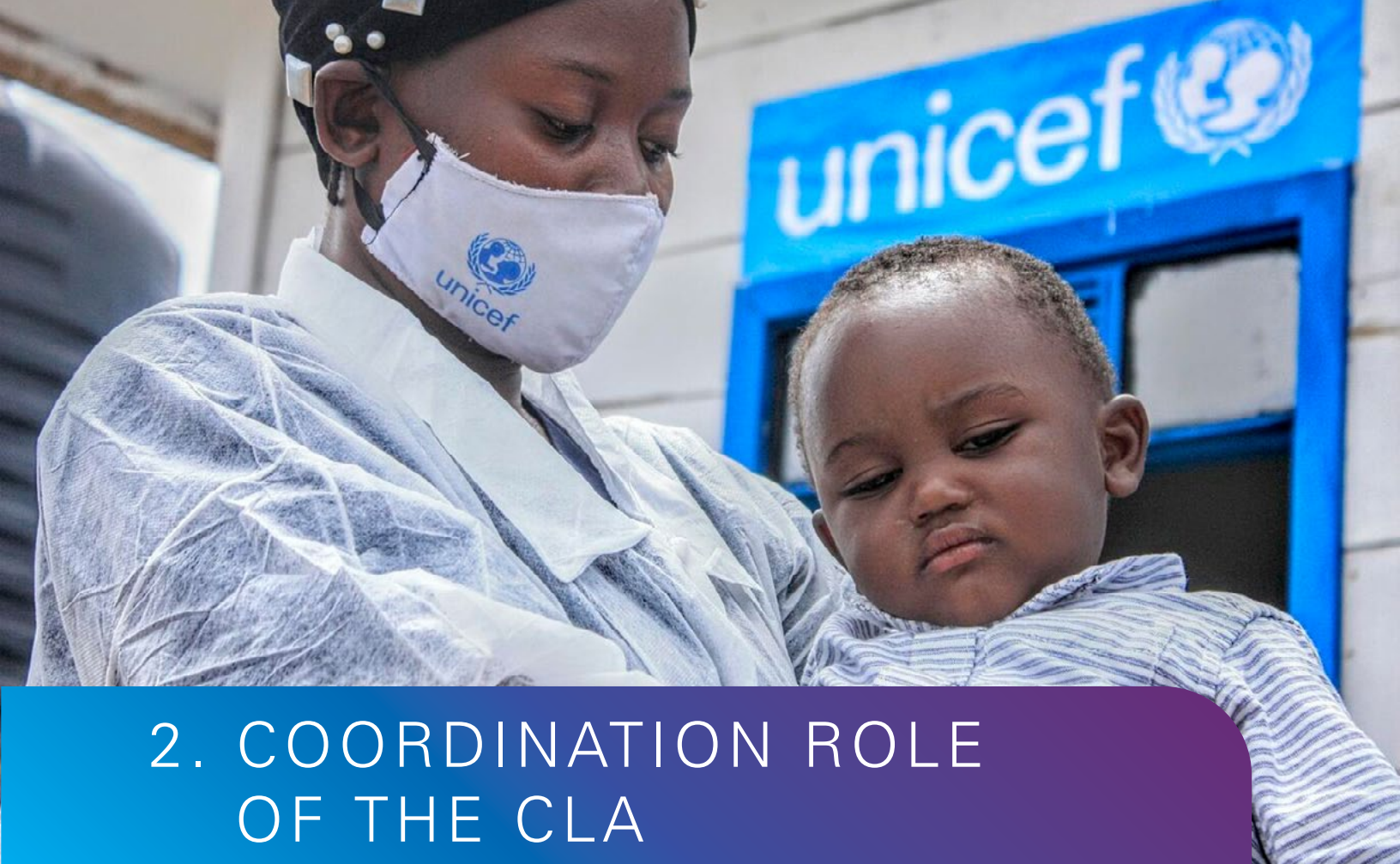
2. COORDINATION ROLE OF THE CLA

Evaluation questions covered in this section:

EQ1: Is UNICEF fulfilling its CLA responsibilities in line with the principles/standards/roles of the cluster approach?

EQ2: Is UNICEF's CLA role aligned with the coordination and response needs of country level clusters and/or other relevant coordination bodies?

The coordination role of a cluster lead agency requires investment in terms of human resources capacity, tools, guidance documentation and other coordination support services. As the responsibilities for the global and country levels differ somewhat, they are treated separately here.

2.1 Global coordination responsibilities

The evaluation found that UNICEF fulfils its three global coordination responsibilities, namely: **standards- and policy-setting, building response capacity and operational**

support.[24] The response of the clusters to the COVID-19 pandemic is an illustrative example: **new policies and technical guidance** have been issued, **training materials** have been developed or adapted and **extensive operational support provided**, especially through cluster **help desk functions and working groups** – including in countries where the cluster approach has not been activated. A wide range of new manuals and guidance materials related to the pandemic has been shared with country-based clusters. The evaluation team also heard of efforts to translate guidance materials and trainings – be they related to COVID-19 or other matters – into different languages to ensure uptake. In short, the four global clusters for which UNICEF carries responsibility **generally passed the test well.**

Day-to-day operational support and technical guidance

Day-to-day operational support and technical guidance is probably the area where the global clusters have matured most since 2013. As part of this support and guidance, they provide extensive surge capacity through rapid field support teams; develop relevant guidance materials and technical advice; have training modules and events available; and put standardized information tools and management in place.

EQ5: Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to collectively understand and develop cluster responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in line with humanitarian standards and principles?

EQ6: What efforts have been made by the CLA to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?

Their help desk function is particularly appreciated by the country-based clusters. Many of the country-based key informants noted how much they had benefited from this function, including during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the CP AoR help desk, which operates in multiple languages, has been noted as one of the AoR's most important achievements. In relation to COVID-19, the CP AoR – drawing upon the capacities of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF's Programme Division (PD) – started to share information and disseminate guidance materials covering technical and operational issues as well as broader analysis and policy guidance as early as April 2020. One clear example of a critical and innovative step taken by the CP AoR is the tracking of the disruption of services in-country, which it carried out with the help of

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24 See Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response', IASC, Geneva, 2006.

country-based clusters and UNICEF's Data and Analytics Division.

The global nutrition cluster's (GNC) work in providing the country-based clusters with technical guidance was also cited as very helpful. In the latter case, key informants noted in particular the value of the technical knowledge and expertise mustered by the GNC together with the wealth of resources, training and other materials made available from the global level. Increased support to the country level was also noted as an achievement of the global education cluster (GEC), which has also provided a global platform to discuss education in emergencies, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The GEC circulated guidelines on safe schools in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic beyond the cluster countries. The global WASH cluster (GWC) has been singled out not only for its technical expertise, but also for its collaborative way of working and achievements in giving attention to broader and deeper WASH issues.[25]

Operational support also includes providing **surge capacity and filling coordination positions** at the **country level,** a role which requires a significant amount of time and resources. The sourcing of individuals to fill cluster coordination positions can be a bottleneck, and while (as will be discussed further below) the evaluation team noted significant progress in terms of staffing coordination positions, there were still noticeable gaps in coordination positions at the country level. Based on information provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), eight out of 67 full-time UNICEF cluster coordinator positions at the country level were **vacant for more than three months** in 2020. Another three cluster coordinator positions, and six information management officer positions, were filled by surge or standby partners.[26] While this indicates an improvement from the situation described in CLARE I (which found that 28 of 95 positions were filled by globally managed standby partner rosters), the remaining gaps in 2020 – more than 15 years into the cluster approach – raise the question of **sustainable solutions** in ensuring continued cluster staffing. While there are positive effects from standby arrangements, such as strong partnerships, they also risk reducing a sense of ownership. UNICEF as CLA has yet to put in place the systems and staffing required to ensure that cluster coordination positions are filled, without remaining dependent on surge rosters and standby partners.

While the clusters' **information-sharing role** has generally been appreciated, the evaluation also received comments that suggest there may still be room for improvement. Globally, the CLA's responsibilities also include

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25 As seen in the WASH sector road map, which is further discussed in the leadership section, see 3.3 below.
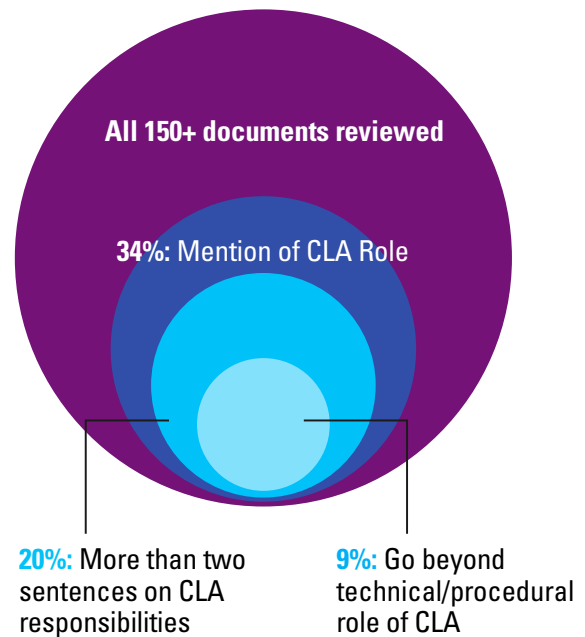26 For more on the staffing, see page 58.

standard- and policy-setting. In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the global clusters produced a large amount of information and guidance materials. Some of these were highly appreciated at the country level, because they provided technical advice. At the same time, numerous survey respondents felt that they received too many guidelines that were not relevant for their particular context.[27] It should be noted that the UNICEF-led global clusters took varying approaches to supporting the country-based clusters. The GEC, for example, supported only those countries where education clusters were in place, while WASH supported all countries, including those without the cluster coordination architecture.

The standards and policy function also extends to **strategy and vision on longer-term issues.** In this regard, the document analysis revealed few documents linked to **UNICEF's strategic, institutional approach to its CLA role.** As seen in Figure 5, among the more than 150 documents reviewed by the evaluation team (see Annex 2 for a complete list), only around a third mention the CLA role at all, and only a fifth go into what this actually entails (beyond one or two sentences). Less than 10 per cent of the documents reviewed (15 in total) go beyond the more technical and procedural aspects of coordination to include reflections

FIGURE 5
Document analysis — references to CLA role

All 150+ documents reviewed

34%: Mention of CLA Role

20%: More than two sentences on CLA responsibilities

9%: Go beyond technical/procedural role of CLA

on, for example, strategy, leadership skills, and how to carry out the CLA function.

To be fair, the analysis showed that the documentation and guidance that was provided, including cluster/AoR policies, procedures, tools and guidance, to a very

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27 It was not possible for the evaluation team to assess the quality of the guidelines in all of these cases – particularly as they were given in anonymous and unspecified comments – but it is important to take note of the perception, as it may indicate that quantity does not always equal quality. As for all comments from survey respondents, it should be borne in mind that a majority did not provide any comments at all, and hence there could be a negative bias in the selection of respondents who did choose to provide additional comments.

large extent **reflect and operationalize IASC cluster standards and policies**, often through direct reference. A significant gap exists, however, in IASC documents and policies that clarify the CLA role in terms of leadership. This leadership role, elaborated in detail later in this report, is all the more necessary in terms of providing vision and strategy. The 2006 IASC cluster guidance,[28] which in fact is the only document that covers the global CLA role, appears **significantly outdated**.[29] Global-level analyses and practical advice on what to do in the face of new trends and challenges, such as regional forced displacement/migration crises or pandemics, seem necessary.[30]

Setting strategic direction or providing technical support?

The evaluation noted a lack of clarity and some **disagreement on whether the global clusters' primary focus should be on setting direction and strategic priorities or on practical day-to-day coordination services and technical support to the in-country clusters**. There is little guidance available for cluster coordinators on how to address the balance between the two fields, while key informants suggested

> **EQ8:** Has UNICEF as the CLA taken steps to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit for purpose in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space)?

that it is dependent on the individual fulfilling the cluster coordinator role. In fact, as seen in Figure 6,[31] the importance of "personalities" was frequently raised, either as a positive or a negative. Indeed, at all levels and irrespective of cluster, informants mentioned that the **process, direction and focus of cluster coordination depends on the individual driving it**, i.e. on the personality of the cluster coordinator, rather than on an agreed upon and consistent institutional approach. The change in focus of some of the global clusters from operations to policy (or vice versa) came with the change of the cluster coordinator and appear to be related to their background, interest or understanding of the role of clusters. Put differently, **UNICEF as CLA has not given clear direction as to what the clusters' focus should be**. Furthermore, clusters are, at times, expected to roll out key UNICEF initiatives that are more

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28 IASC guidance note, 2006.

29 CLARE I signalled that the IASC cluster guidance was becoming outdated in several ways, for example in monitoring the global clusters' performance (p.25). This evaluation did not find evidence that this issue has been taken up since 2013. Since 2013, IASC guidance on the clusters has focused on the country level. This evaluation did not find evidence that UNICEF has raised this issue in the IASC.

30 There is a question as to whether the clusters are fit-for-purpose in view of regional crises or pandemics. See also further under section 3 on leadership.

31 Figure 6 was developed based on the systematic coding of all key informant interview notes, and shows the cross-coding of various factors mentioned, and where interviewees have signalled these factors as negatively or positively influencing how UNICEF is carrying out its CLA role. For more information regarding the use/meaning of the specific codes used, see Annex 2d (KII Coding Table).

programmatic in nature. This lack of direction is also confirmed by the document analysis, which shows that the relatively few UNICEF-wide guidance documents related to the CLA role do not specifically clarify this issue.

FIGURE 6

FIGURE 6
Overview of perceived obstacles and enablers for UNICEF as CLA

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES
GLOBAL, REGIONAL, & COUNTRY LEVELS

	Obstacle for UNICEF as CLA	Enabler for UNICEF as CLA
Personalities	●	●
Competition	●	
Comes down to incentives	●	
Context/momentum	●	●
Funding	●	●
HR concerns	⬤	●
Mismatch/asymmetry/pushpull	●	
Power/role (im)balances	●	●
Division of labour/roles (incl. share workload)	●	⬤
Communication	●	●
Pressure on coordinators/IMO	●	●
For own agency not collective	●	
Double-hatting	●	
Trust	●	●
Institutional support/Internal UNICEF	●	●
Reporting lines	●	●
Relationship with government	●	⬤
Cluster system/relationships	●	●
Lack of overall clarity/vision	●	

The larger the red dot, the more interviewees indicated this area as an obstacle/enabler for UNICEF to carry out its CLA role. See Annex 2d for a description of the codes used.

This issue around focus is particularly well illustrated by the GNC. The GNC has set up a technical alliance dedicated to providing country-level support. Despite its name, however, it has focused more on strategic questions, such as the place of nutrition, as a sector, in relation to other sectors, notably food security and health. This conceptual issue is not a new one.[32] Other than a difference in perspectives – which essentially boils down to seeing nutrition as an extension of food security or in a more holistic context in which nutritional status relates to health and other determinants as well – the debate may also be related to the perennial issue in humanitarian response of which sector (or perspective on needs) comes first. Related to this issue is the concern about which agency receives the most profile and attention. Regardless, the result of such undercurrents is that cluster coordinators may have to work as diplomats managing relationships between (United Nations and non-United Nations) agencies.[33]

Established in 2012, UNICEF's global cluster coordination unit (GCCU) plays a key role in UNICEF's global responsibilities. CLARE I found clear indications already in 2013 that consolidation under the GCCU was beginning to yield positive results. The GCCU connects the UNICEF-led global clusters and has a representation role at the global inter-cluster level. It also works to harmonize cluster planning cycles and coordinates the reform agenda on issues such AAP and localization. In spite of these important contributions, the evaluation team noted that the work of the GCCU was not very well known. A number of key informants from UNICEF's clusters were unclear of the

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32 The debate seems less prevalent at the country level (though not absent), although in certain contexts the nutrition cluster has close ties with the health and WASH clusters, and in others with food security.

33 This latter issue of managing relationships is even more prevalent in the case of the GEC. The co-leadership arrangement of the GEC is the topic of a separate, though linked, review carried out in parallel to this evaluation.

unit's role. Indeed, less than a handful of the global-level key informants who were asked about the GCCU directly felt that they knew its work well enough to have an opinion on it. At country level, no respondent directly referred to the GCCU, but saw the respective global clusters as the source for all guidance documentation and capacity development.

Despite this lack of profile, the unit has worked hard behind the scenes in ensuring that UNICEF's global clusters are sharing their practices, in promoting mutual learning, and in supporting the cluster coordinators in their inter-agency workload. It also works on identifying opportunities to make changes and improvements in UNICEF policy, such as working on the cluster coordinator competency framework (see further below). The GCCU can play a positive role in identifying and unlocking challenges and bottlenecks that the clusters identify. In UNICEF it may be seen as an internal mechanism, but as noted above, the GCCU also plays a representation role. That representation role is one that could perhaps be further expanded on, but there is also the question of how that representation role relates to the representation role of the Director and Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), whom GCCU reports to, particularly with regard to IASC structures. CLARE I highlighted that UNICEF's positive efforts to consolidate cluster support under the GCCU and integrate the CLA role into its policies should be maintained and built upon. This point could remain a valid one if UNICEF clarifies the role of the GCCU, particularly with regard

to representation and how it complements the representation role of others in EMOPS.

2.2   In-country coordination responsibilities

6+1 core functions for country-based clusters

1. Supporting service delivery by providing a platform for agreement on approaches and elimination of duplication.

2. Informing strategic decision-making of the humanitarian country team for the humanitarian response through coordination of needs assessment, gap analysis and prioritization.

3. Planning and strategy development including sectoral plans, adherence to standards and funding needs.

4. Advocacy to address identified concerns on behalf of cluster participants and the affected population.

5. Monitoring and reporting on the cluster strategy and results; recommending corrective action where necessary.

6. Contingency planning/preparedness/ national capacity-building where needed and where capacity exists within the cluster.

+1: The IASC has also added "accountability to affected populations" as a key area of work that clusters should focus on.

Source: 2015 IASC cluster reference module

The 2015 IASC cluster reference module sets out the core functions of country-based clusters (see text box). This evaluation looks at several of these responsibilities,[34] focusing primarily on the extent to which the CLA in general, and cluster coordinators in particular, have been able to navigate and manage these 'six plus one' responsibilities. In contrast to CLARE I, cluster activation is much less of an issue in 2021, as most major humanitarian settings have adopted the cluster approach. The more frequent, and more pressing, challenge is transition from the clusters to another coordination mechanism in protracted emergencies. This evaluation did not look at this conundrum in detail, but the lengthy duration of the clusters, often as a result of the protracted nature of a conflict, is a burden for the CLA.

UNICEF has made **significant progress in fulfilling its country-level cluster coordination responsibilities**.[35] Country-level UNICEF-led clusters have information management systems in place and act as conduits to identify funding opportunities. Survey results generally show strong appreciation for how UNICEF works as a CLA in this regard: more than 90 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UNICEF, as CLA, works to ensure that the response is coordinated. On this, cluster coordinators and cluster partners tend to agree (see Figure 7). Moreover, a large number of interview respondents favourably compare UNICEF to other CLAs, pointing particularly to the efforts they have witnessed by UNICEF to try to ensure it has dedicated capacity in place for the coordination role. Numerous respondents also referred to the fact that UNICEF is undertaking this evaluation as evidence of its investment in its CLA role.

Common aspects of the many examples of cluster progress shared with the evaluation team are UNICEF's perceived efforts to share clear and frequent information, data and analysis on needs and context; to mobilize resources for the collective response; and to improve the continuous deployment of dedicated cluster coordination staff. The degree to which UNICEF has been successful in these efforts, however, is to be measured against a number of reported gaps and obstacles that still remain, as will be shown in the section covering the key aspects of **information-sharing, resource mobilization and capacity-building, and staffing**.

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34 The cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM) system covers these functions systematically.

35 While well-functioning cluster coordination can certainly be attributed to CLA, the evaluation saw that many key informants did not necessarily distinguish between the role and input of the CLA and the overall cluster performance. This issue also reveals a deeper problem in the sense that roles and responsibilities in the cluster context, something critical to strengthening accountability, are not as clear as they should be.
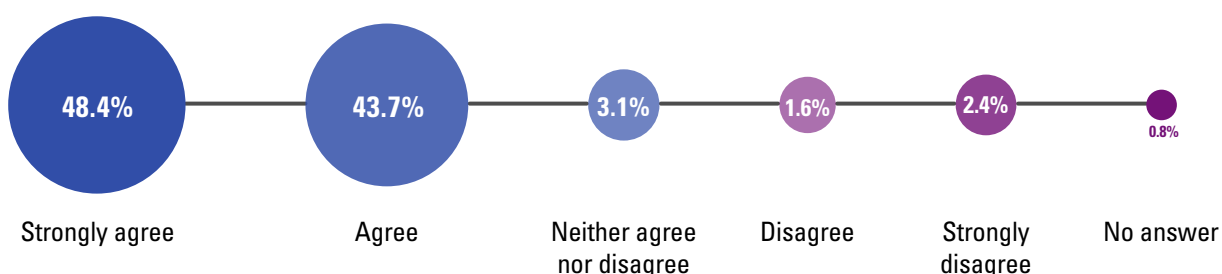
36 Leaving space for cluster partners to bring in ideas was also frequently mentioned but is covered later in this report.
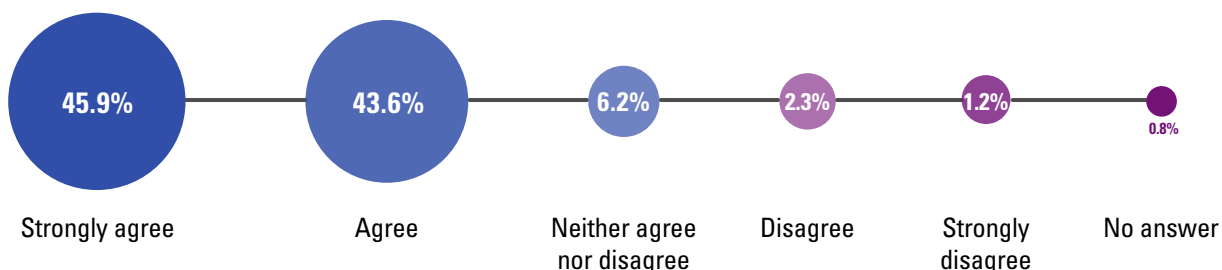
FIGURE 7
Survey responses — coordination

> "UNICEF as CLA works to ensure the response in coordinated."

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER LEADS/COORDINATORS

48.4%	43.7%	3.1%	1.6%	2.4%	0.8%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER PARTNERS

45.9%	43.6%	6.2%	2.3%	1.2%	0.8%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

It is noteworthy that country-based clusters have **been given progressively more responsibilities** since the early days of the cluster approach. They have become the conduits for processes such as developing the humanitarian response plan, monitoring and managing the programme cycle for the sector and preparing pooled funding allocations. There are also times where clusters are asked to roll out UNICEF programmatic initiatives, such as the integration of cash in UNICEF's response. Leaving aside the question of whether this

additional workload is a positive development, the evaluation found that UNICEF has done well with regard to coordination in relation to the workload. This achievement is also seen in the survey responses: 60 per cent of cluster partners who answered the question indicated that UNICEF (co-)leads or coordinators fully ensured that their coordination needs are met, while 34 per cent indicated their needs were partially met (see Figure 8).[37] **Considering the increasing complexity of the contexts in which the clusters are activated and the proliferation of tasks, this is no small achievement.**

In terms of which of the CLA's coordination efforts are **most valued**, the **organization of meetings and information-sharing** scored relatively well among survey respondents. Many respondents also agreed that UNICEF as CLA works well **to ensure response gaps are filled** (see Figure 9).
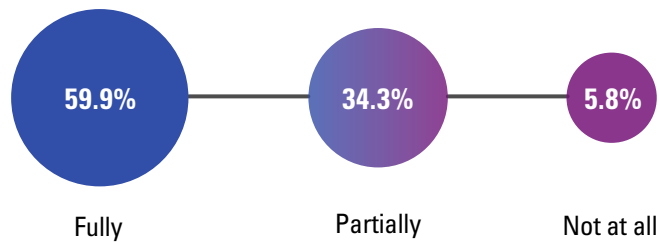
EQ16: What efforts have been made by the CLA to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?

FIGURE 8
Survey responses — cluster partner needs

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
CLUSTER PARTNERS *

" To what extent do country-based cluster/AoR (co-)leads/coordinators ensure that your coordination needs, as cluster partner, are met? "

59.9% — **34.3%** — **5.8%**

Fully   Partially   Not at all

* Percentages of responses per option, from all 242 answers to this question (in total 56.5% of all full survey responses)

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37 Survey respondents who answered that their coordination needs were met "partially" or "not at all" signalled issues linked to a perceived lack of transparency of the cluster lead/coordinator, instances of the absence of a dedicated coordinator, a lack of adequate mobilization of resources for the cluster, and the lack of training opportunities provided, especially to national partners.

FIGURE 9

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES

> UNICEF as CLA works to ensure that gaps are filled.

31%	50%	11.5%	4%	2%	1.5%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
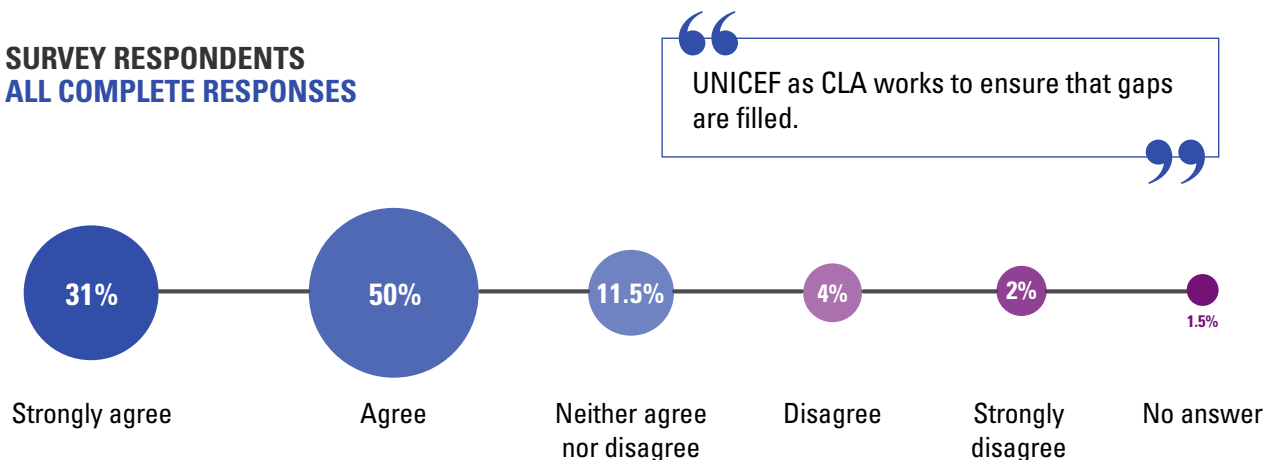
At the same time, cluster coordinators themselves signalled frustration with the proliferation of tasks and the extent to which it comes at the expense of a quality output. Many cluster coordinators registered their dissatisfaction at the heavy workload covering mundane coordination matters, which they noted **does not leave space for more strategic thinking or reflection on the cluster's state of affairs.** Essentially, this raises a question around expectations and the purpose of the clusters, not unlike the challenge raised at the global level in section 2.1 above: are cluster coordinators expected to spend their time on technical/administrative tasks such as populating templates and other planning/reporting documents, or should they do more in terms of providing strategic direction and leadership?[38] Some key informants argued that the day-to-day workload serves the HPC process, and in particular the humanitarian response plan (HRP), which articulates the clusters' strategy and vision. Others argued that the HRP is a plan designed around the availability of funding and contains little strategy. Some key informants expressed the view that the work of the clusters to serve OCHA and donor countries has become process-heavy and mechanical.

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38   See also next chapter on the issue of leadership.

Data, information and analysis

Survey responses and key informant interviews indicated that in terms of information-sharing and analysis, much of the cluster coordinators' and information managers' time is taken by responding to the expectations of the system: e.g. to populate information templates such as the '4 or 5 Ws',[39] collect data for dashboards, or respond to other requests for information. Cluster partners, however, appreciate the information-sharing. For example, one key informant noted that for his cluster, the cluster's information management and sharing meant that everyone was 'on the same page' and the processes were agreed upon and well understood.

This point fits with the general finding that cluster partners would also appreciate more **analysis on achievements and gaps**. More than just publishing numbers of people affected or numbers of agencies present, it is the analysis of the data that can help partners take informed decisions on their priorities and objectives. This, however, does not happen as systematically and comprehensively as desired. As put succinctly by one country cluster coordinator: "We have a lot of data, but very little time for analysis, while such analysis is so much needed to understand the fundamental issues." Likewise, a colleague in another country noted, "We are managing huge Excel files, but I have no time to process them."

It is noteworthy that, as will be discussed more in detail below, a number of clusters now have more dedicated information management staff. For example, information provided to the evaluation team from the GEC indicates that of 29 operations, 16 have a dedicated information management officer (IMO) (seven more are 'double-hatting', and the remainder are vacant/ no position created). The picture is similar in the GNC: out of 28 operations, seven IMOs are dedicated/full-time, nine are double-hatted, and the remainder are vacant/no position/occupied by standby partners. While this is a significant improvement since CLARE I in 2013, the evaluation team had concerns regarding the remaining staffing gaps. Ideally, all of the IMO positions should be staffed with dedicated capacity.

Some key informants also raised the question of whether one IMO can reasonably process the sheer volume of data that is currently being collected by clusters, particularly in some of the more complex emergencies with a large number of cluster partners. Some CCs and IMOs mentioned the need for a data manager or assistant who can chase up partners to ensure timely reporting and can collect the data for the IMO to process, analyse and convert into a useful product. At the same time, the

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39 The 4W is an OCHA tool designed to provide key information to know Who is doing What, Where and When (5W add 'and for Whom').

desire to process large volumes of information should be weighed against the prospect for its actual use. It may be that what is needed is not additional capacity to process *more information*, but rather a targeted approach focused on getting the *right information* to the right people to enable timely decision-making.

Key informants from contexts/clusters that had dedicated IM capacity in place tended to be more positive with regard to the efforts of the CLA to strengthen the quality of the response and to identify gaps. The same was observed in the survey, where for example as many as 60 per cent of respondents from one country – where efforts had been made to fill IM positions with dedicated staff – strongly agreed that UNICEF as CLA works to ensure that gaps are filled. A further 40 per cent agreed, and no one disagreed. Conversely, respondents from another country-level cluster, which has a weaker IM capacity in place, were less positive. Only 32.7 per cent strongly agreed, and 13.5 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the same statement. This relationship could be a coincidence, as there are likely other variables at play, but it does indicate a possible link between capacity for analysis and the perception of efforts to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the emergency response.

Overall, the evidence would suggest that UNICEF needs to give (more) thought to the use and users of data, information and analysis. Who are the primary stakeholders of the cluster's information role? There is also a need to consider the emphasis on data and the extent to which processing high volumes of information may come at the expense of analysis and use of that information. More thinking around what data, for whom and when may allow a more targeted approach that emphasizes the relevance and use of data for strategic decision-making, rather than data-gathering for its own sake.

The evaluation team also heard a number of comments about OCHA's role in information collection and use, best summarized by this remark from a key informant: "I was surprised that OCHA does not play its role in supporting the clusters… OCHA asks us for huge numbers of documents and information and then when they want to talk about the crisis, they demand more information. It's exhausting..." A cluster coordinator in the same country also noted that because of the heavy workload involved in day-to-day coordination, there were no conversations about the quality of the coordination process.

Funding, partnerships and collective response

The evaluation team noted that UNICEF's efforts to mobilize resources for the collective response through the clusters has been generally appreciated by stakeholders, with 69 per cent of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that "UNICEF as CLA mobilizes resources for the cluster/sub-cluster."

FIGURE 10
Survey responses — mobilization of resources

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES

> " UNICEF as CLA mobilizes resource for the cluster/sub-cluster. "

26%	43%	15%	6.5%	3.5%	5.6%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
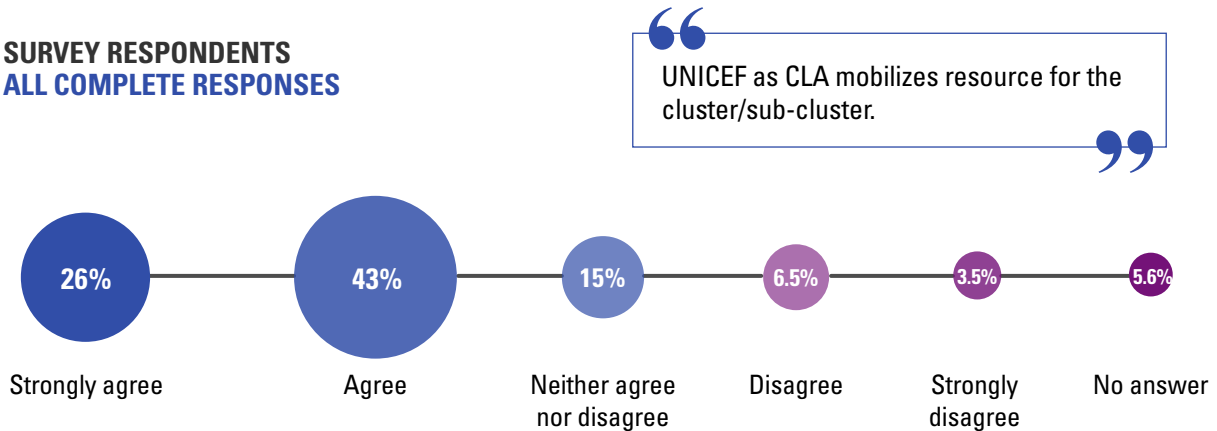
It should be noted that both the perceptions gathered in the survey and the findings from the interviews indicate that the level, character, and transparency of UNICEF's efforts to mobilize funding for the clusters differs from country to country and cluster to cluster. There is a **high degree of variation in views about whether UNICEF is primarily concerned about its own funding, or whether it works to mobilize resources for the collective**. While this is based on perceptions and it was not possible for the evaluation team to reach its own conclusions in this regard, it is worth pointing out that given the collective nature of the clusters, the perception of partners is important. Further inquiry into why these perceptions exist, and what UNICEF can do to address negative perceptions of its resource mobilization role, may be worthwhile.

The role of the clusters in mobilizing and preparing allocation decisions of funding for the (sector) response has increased significantly over the years. As seen in the textbox above, on the 6+1 functions of the country-based clusters, they were not initially intended to play a central role in funding allocation processes, and this **additional allocation role has benefits and drawbacks**. Putting the clusters in charge of preparing funding allocation decisions would in principle strengthen their collective character, provided that these discussions are transparent and involve the entire cluster. At the same time, when those deciding on the funding are also those in a position to receive it, there is a clear conflict of interest. This puts the CLA in a particularly awkward position, especially when resources it has mobilized for the cluster as a whole end up being allocated to the CLA

and its implementing partners. Survey results and interview analysis show that national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) particularly appreciate UNICEF's efforts to mobilize resources for the cluster. At the same time, they voiced significant frustration that funding only very rarely came their way, and only if they were working with United Nations agencies or international NGOs (which is more of a critique of the governance arrangements of many pooled funding mechanisms rather than a criticism of the clusters or CLA per se). Others also commented that the funding allocation role **risks making the clusters look like NGO implementing partner arrangements,** which sees civil society voices being muted out of fear of losing funding opportunities. While the impetus behind this shift in roles is unclear, the role of the clusters in funding allocation decisions merits further review, perhaps under the auspices of the IASC.[40]

The strongest divergence of views was on the subject of whether the individual agency or the collective comes first in the calculus of the CLA – that is, the extent to which UNICEF is viewed as an honest broker in its CLA role. At first glance, answers to the two survey questions touching upon how UNICEF balances its agency interests with those of the collective

appear rather positive.[41] Indeed, as can be seen in Figure 11, a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UNICEF promotes the interests of the collective response rather than its own interests, and that it makes a sufficient distinction between its role as a cluster lead and its role as an individual agency funding implementing partners. This survey result matches with those key informants who were greatly appreciative of how the UNICEF coordinator takes a clear stance for the cluster, rather than for UNICEF.

Again, considerable variation was seen from one context to the next. For example, for one country cluster, it was noted that the cluster coordinator led the process in a highly transparent and open manner involving both United Nations agencies and NGOs, thereby pushing back on an otherwise common perception that UNICEF (or United Nations agencies in general) want a major share of the available pooled funding. A similarly positive experience was shared from another country, where a respondent explained that they had initially been reticent when applying for funding, thinking UNICEF would get it all, but then when funding was allocated, a UNICEF project was rejected, indicating high levels of transparency in the process.

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40   The CLARE I management response includes an action to "clarify the role of cluster/cluster coordinators viz. pooled funds, project submissions and funding decisions." It is fair to say that the very significant increase in cluster work related to funding did not emerge as an outcome of this clarification.

41   It should be noted that the responses in general indicated very high percentages on the "agree" or "strongly agree" option throughout the survey. This scoring suggests the need to relativize the numbers in Figure 10.

EQ6: Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?

EQ11: Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to strengthened partnership in emergency response?

These examples of openness stand in stark contrast with other views raised to the effect that UNICEF is **more concerned about its own resources than considering funding for the collective response and cluster partners.** Admittedly, UNICEF usually operates through **implementing partners, who are also cluster partners**. The evaluation team heard that donors prefer to interact with a reduced number of partners, and by going through UNICEF, it is arguably possible to better coordinate and harmonize activities. That said, for cluster partners who are not UNICEF implementing partners, the situation becomes a difficult one, and the evaluation team frequently heard that UNICEF does not **navigate the conflict of interests** well. To return to the survey results, the statements, which generally indicated that the way in which UNICEF carries out its fundraising role is appreciated, were among those where respondents indicated the highest percentage of disagreement in the whole survey, suggesting that it was a relatively polarizing question. This relative disagreement is aligned with the views of a majority of key informants.[42] As summarized by one of them: "UNICEF does not always use its role to fundraise on behalf of the cluster." In this example, UNICEF as CLA pushed cluster partners to intervene, while it did very little in terms of raising its voice on the funding gap for the response because UNICEF itself was not planning to intervene directly. The list of examples of similar remarks from respondents – both from within the survey and from key informant interviews – is rather long, including comments such as, "UNICEF puts itself in the forefront when it comes to funding allocations" and UNICEF "uses the cluster as a tool to access funds". Sentiments were also expressed by four different UNICEF coordinators, in different countries and clusters, that while they endeavoured to work for the cluster and keep an open line of communication and transparency, particularly regarding issues of funding, they often had difficulties in justifying this position internally in the UNICEF country office.

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42 It is noteworthy that survey respondents were generally more positive on the way in which UNICEF carries out its CLA role than key informant interviees. A possible explanation for this is the methodology bias, with the interviews allowing for more in-depth explanation of questions and analysis of answers. Another explanation is the method by which the surveys were distributed: some cluster coordinators may have been more effective in disseminating the survey and encouraging cluster partners to complete the survey (see also sections 1.3 and 1.4 for explanations regarding the use of KIIs as the primary source of information).

The perception that UNICEF uses the clusters for its own purposes goes beyond funding, however. UNICEF's **desire for profile** was mentioned repeatedly in interviews with cluster partners, noting how the agency seeks to use the cluster to promote or implement its agenda, rather than following a **collective way of working**. As shown in Figure 6 above, among the main obstacles identified by key informants to UNICEF carrying out its CLA role was a perception that UNICEF works for the agency, and not the collective. As one respondent said, "I am a bit bothered how UNICEF is showcasing the cluster's work by appropriating its results. This undermines the partnerships we create and the collective nature of the response. They are not willing to acknowledge that what we do is done as a collective." This comment is reminiscent of an often-heard NGO critique of UNICEF that NGO activities funded by UNICEF are exclusively recognized as UNICEF achievements. This perception was epitomized by a key informant as, "Any child we treat is UNICEF's and they are fast to put their logo on it, so to speak."

Importantly, both the survey and the key informant interviews gathered perception-based evidence, and the evaluation team **also saw efforts by UNICEF to emphasize and clarify** its stance vis-à-vis partners. For example, UNICEF's *Cluster Coordination*

Guidance for Country Offices states in several places that staff involved should "represent both the interests of UNICEF as an organization and the interests of the [clusters and AoR] it leads". UNICEF situation reports[43] frequently note that achievements are made by "UNICEF and partners," although they do not always distinguish between UNICEF's implementing partners and cluster partners more broadly. Moreover, given that the agency is often among the largest in a country, it is easily perceived as imposing its interests on cluster partners.

The concern raised by some key informants related to the power dynamics that can exist between a large international organization like UNICEF and national and local NGOs may have negative consequences for the quality of partnership. As summarized by one survey respondent: "Partners are afraid to be terminated from UNICEF's partnership list if they openly talk of UNICEF's areas of improvement in the cluster's performance". The power dynamic is something that needs to be actively addressed to avoid negative repercussions on partnerships. There are also mixed reviews on how the *Principles of Partnership (PoP)* are put into practice by the clusters in different countries. The PoP could be used as a framework for a self-assessment of the cluster's ways of working and the quality of the partnerships. Individual cluster

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43 The situation reports are the main reporting tool to monitor UNICEF's humanitarian response, see https://www.unicef.org/appeals/situation-reports.

coordinators adopt a range of approaches to partnership. For example, "the one challenging thing in the past was the fact that the cluster coordinator did not really work for engagement of NGOs. This is now resolved with the arrival of the new coordinator". Evidence from across the interviews, survey and document review suggests there is still not a systematic approach to partnership by UNICEF as CLA, which needs to be addressed.

In short, transparency on intentions, inputs and achievements is important. Perceptions of UNICEF withholding information on its agenda, especially in its relations with donors, create a **lack of trust and damages the CLA's credibility**. Whether UNICEF feels that this perception corresponds to facts may be beside the point; the agency **should be aware of this persistent perception** and take action to mitigate it. For example, cluster coordinators could lobby donors directly with cluster briefs outlining what cluster partners are (planning on) doing.

Staffing of cluster leadership positions

Critical to cluster coordination at the country level is the continued **staffing of cluster leadership positions**, including the coordinator and information manager, which has become the standard configuration of cluster leadership. As mentioned in section 2.1 above, there are still noticeable gaps, but

it should be recognized that progress has been made since CLARE I. In spite of the human resource constraints noted earlier, UNICEF has been **able to find** *ad hoc* **solutions in times of peak crisis**, such as deploying full-time, dedicated cluster coordinators for critical clusters – either because of the pivotal role of the technical sector/cluster to the humanitarian context or because of the need to boost leadership and performance – even when this is not the norm in the given context. In some contexts, for example, this includes full-time dedicated cluster coordinators at the sub-national level. Typically, cluster coordinators at the sub-national level have additional tasks (for UNICEF) over and above cluster coordination. However, for some clusters in contexts where the emergency is strongly concentrated in a single area of the country, as in the case of Mozambique, this has been the preferred practice.[44]

In 2013, CLARE I noted that '**double-hatting**', i.e. the practice of performing the cluster role in addition to UNICEF responsibilities and tasks, was prevalent, with only 28 per cent of staff working full-time on cluster activities. It appears that UNICEF has made a significant effort to improve this situation. As seen in Figure 12, in 2020, 61 per cent of cluster coordinators and 39 per cent of IMOs at the national level in UNICEF (co-)led clusters were in dedicated, full-time positions.

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44   In these countries where the emergency is concentrated in a particular area, OCHA counts the sub-national level as similar to the national level.

FIGURE 11
Survey responses — UNICEF interests v. collective interests

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES

> UNICEF as CLA promotes the interests of the collective response, rather than its interests as an individual agency.

27.6%	41.1%	14.7%	6%	5.6%	5%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES

> UNICEF as CLA makes a sufficient distinction between its role as a cluster lead, and its role as an agency funding implementing partners.

26.4%	40.7%	12.4%	7.9%	5.8%	6.8%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

FIGURE 12
UNICEF cluster staffing, national level 2020

(%)

Legend:
- No position or vacant
- GCC surge or standby parter
- 'Double-hatted' or split between 2 clusters
- Full time, dedicated to 1 cluster
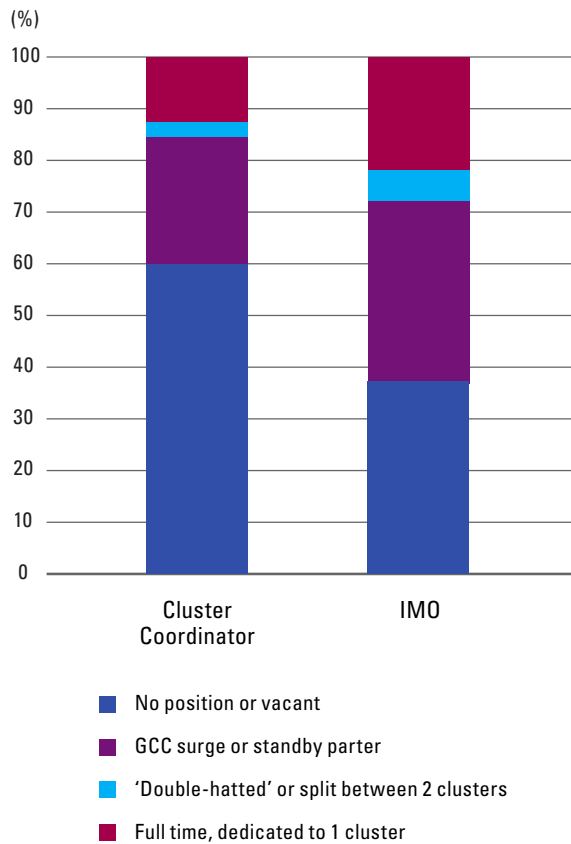
Key informants, both internal and external to UNICEF, highlighted and appreciated the efforts UNICEF has made in recent years to employ dedicated cluster coordinators. Still, while UNICEF can be commended for the improvement, it does not reach the 100 per

cent ideal of dedicated fixed-term staff, and gaps in these positions at the country level still happen frequently, sometimes for prolonged periods. In one country, for example, the progress of one cluster has been seriously hampered by interruptions in the position of the coordinator deployed by UNICEF. Similarly, in another country, the same cluster saw a gap of six months, which led to significant delays in developing cluster plans and setting priorities in the country. In some situations where clusters have been co-led, the expectation has been that the co-coordinator could also fill in for the UNICEF coordinator during these staffing gaps.

An overwhelming majority of key informants made it very clear that they **dislike the double-hatting**. Double-hatting creates a conflict of interest and gives even more room for the perception that UNICEF uses the clusters for its own ends, or creates further confusion between UNICEF as a 'donor' and UNICEF as CLA. Interestingly, some key informants noted that double-hatting also leads to clusters and cluster coordinators being taken less seriously by counterparts, including the government.[45]

Only a very small number of cluster coordinators interviewed noted that they prefer the double role because it provides them with access to UNICEF's internal meetings and documents. For example, one cluster coordinator noted that thanks to the double role, they could stay abreast of internal conversations and influence

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45 At sub-national level, double-hatting is a standard practice.

dialogues with the governments or donors. While this is an understandable desire on the part of the cluster coordinator, it reflects a deeper problem. It feeds the perception that cluster coordinators are just coordinators and that the clusters are of lesser importance compared to what UNICEF considers its own work. As a result, **cluster coordinators become isolated from UNICEF, and the CLA role becomes detached from the organization.** In addition, to ensure that cluster coordinators and clusters remain well informed of UNICEF dialogue with the government and donors, UNICEF should be (more) open and transparent about its negotiations and share information and

analysis on the state of its conversations with its cluster coordinators. It is worth highlighting that close to half of the cluster (co-)coordinators who answered the survey found that what they perceive to be their needs are only partially – or not at all – met by UNICEF as an organization (see Figure 13).[46] Figure 6 above also shows how the analysis from the KIIs highlighted human resources concerns (including double-hatting, high turnover and vacancies) and a lack of institutional support from UNICEF as an agency for the CLA role as the two most frequently-mentioned negative aspects of how UNICEF carries out its CLA role.
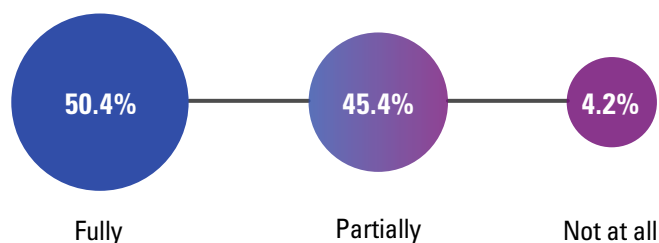

FIGURE 13
Survey responses — partner needs

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
CLUSTER (CO-)LEADS/COORDINATORS *

"
To what extent does UNICEF, as an organization, ensure that your needs, as a (co-)lead/coordinator, are met?
"

50.4% Fully   **45.4%** Partially   **4.2%** Not at all

* Percentages of responses per option, from all 119 answers to this question (in total 27.8% of all full survey responses)

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46 Among those who replied "partially" or "not at all", the issues most frequently raised in comments pertained to heavy workloads due to double-hatting; lack of recognition for role from within other parts of UNICEF; difficulties in communication between coordination team and UNICEF sector programme team; and lack of information management support.

Linked to this staffing gap is the perception that cluster coordinator (CC) positions are not valued within UNICEF in the same way as other positions in UNICEF. The evaluation team encountered this sentiment frequently, as will be discussed further under section 3.2 below. "In terms of a career, there is little above CC other than one P5 position in UNICEF headquarters. It is a bit of glass ceiling, which can put CCs at a bit of disadvantage". Some CCs come from – and/or go back to – UNICEF programming because there is a tendency to see the CC role as being too disconnected from the technical work, which can make one unfit for programming (in terms of budgeting, technical design, administration, etc.) and therefore at a disadvantage for moving up the proverbial ladder.[47]

It seems there is room for UNICEF to make the role of CC (and cluster information managers) more attractive internally. As one KI noted: "It is important that we understand why such an important job is not appealing to the right people".

Table 4 summarizes the findings in this section, benchmarking them against CLARE I findings where relevant. Importantly, several of the issues raised by CLARE I remain valid today. While improvements have been noted, there is scope for UNICEF to go further.

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47 The 2020 UNICEF Humanitarian Review notes: "A career path within UNICEF should be developed for cluster coordinators to attract talent, while CO leadership should also be assessed on how COs are performing on cluster lead and coordination." (p.15.) It recommends that global cluster leadership is financed by core UNICEF resources, and that country-level cluster coordinator positions are staffed by UNICEF personnel. It further recommends that UNICEF prioritize investment in cluster coordinator and support to national co-leads, where applicable. This investment could be through either a specific pool of coordinators, or perhaps more sustainably by ensuring that programme and emergency staff are trained to cover cluster functions, with proper career management so that cluster coordination is seen as a beneficial skill (p.17). United Nations Children's Fund, 'Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action – The Humanitarian Review: Findings and recommendations', UNICEF, New York, 2020.

TABLE 4
Coordination role of the CLA — Summary of findings

	The CLA's Coordination Role: Summary of Findings	
	What is UNICEF doing well	What is UNICEF doing less well
Technical & operational support	Day-to-day operational and technical support is probably the area where the global clusters have matured most since 2013. UNICEF fulfils its global CLA coordination responsibilities in terms of standards and policy-setting, building response capacity and operational support.	The sourcing of individuals to fill cluster coordination positions can be a bottleneck. While the clusters' information-sharing role has generally been appreciated, the evaluation also received comments that point to issues requiring improvement. Quantity does not equal quality.
	UNICEF has also made significant progress in fulfilling its country-based cluster coordination responsibilities.	The degree to which UNICEF has been successful in these efforts, however, differs from cluster to cluster and country to country.
Additional workload	In what can be deemed 'scope creep' – though more on the level of tasks than activation as raised by CLARE I – country-based clusters have become the conduits for processes such as developing the country HRP, monitoring and managing the programme cycle for the sector, and preparing pooled funding allocations. Particularly with this additional workload in mind, UNICEF has done remarkably well with regard to coordination, having made a perceived effort to invest in capacity since CLARE I.	The strategic role of the standards and policy functions is not sufficiently elaborated in the 2006 IASC cluster guidance, which appears significantly outdated given this strategic role is highly relevant in today's complex humanitarian world. UNICEF could do more to push for global-level analyses and practical advice on what to do in the face of new trends and increased challenges. Transition (rather than de-activation) of the clusters into another mechanism, especially in protracted crises, deserves much more attention.
GCCU	The GCCU is active behind the scenes to share practices, promote mutual learning, and support the global clusters.	A number of key informants from UNICEF's cluster partners noted that they did not know of the GCCU and its work or were unclear of the unit's role. Although there are different views on whether the GCCU should play a more visible role – especially externally – it has also been noted that the GCCU could play a prominent role, for example, in leveraging UNICEF's inter-cluster experiences.
Staffing of coordination team	UNICEF has made a significant effort to improve the situation of double-hatting.	Although less prevalent than before, the double-hatted role was still frequently seen by the evaluation team.

The CLA's Coordination Role: Summary of Findings		
	What is UNICEF doing well	**What is UNICEF doing less well**
	UNICEF as CLA has been able to find ad hoc solutions in times of peak crisis, such as deploying full-time, dedicated cluster coordinators for critical clusters.	Gaps in these positions at the country level still happen frequently, sometimes for prolonged periods. Cluster coordination teams report heavy workloads covering mundane coordination matters, which they noted does not leave space for more strategic thinking or reflection on the cluster's state of affairs. This heavy workload links to a lack of clarity about what the focus of clusters should be and how to balance setting direction and strategic priorities with practical day-to-day coordination services and technical support. Cluster coordinator positions are not valued within UNICEF in the same way as other positions in UNICEF.
Relationship with partners	UNICEF has made efforts to emphasize and clarify its stance as both CLA and 'donor' for implementing partners vis-à-vis cluster partners.	UNICEF is often perceived to be more concerned about its own resources instead of pursuing funding for the collective response and cluster partners. Power dynamics between UNICEF and national/local NGOs and their negative repercussions on partnerships are a concern for some. UNICEF still lacks a systematic approach to partnerships.

3. LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE CLA

3.1 The importance of leadership

Ensuring the leadership of the cluster is a key part of the CLA role, as emphasized by the 2020 revised CCCs. 'Leadership' is understood in terms of the actions to provide vision and direction; to motivate and inspire; and to align a group around shared objectives.[48] Leadership

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48   This description is based on the definition of leadership from ALNAP and comments on leadership received from UNICEF in the inception phase (see footnote 6 above). The GNC competency framework for cluster coordination has this definition: "Effectively leads the cluster to work collectively towards a common strategic goal by developing a shared vision based on evidence and providing the leadership to realize it. Harnesses the skills and experience of cluster members, encourages active participation and inspires trust and respect amongst cluster partners. Provides leadership to a wide range of stakeholders beyond their immediate team or direct reports." (Global Nutrition Cluster, 'Competency Framework for Cluster Coordination', GNC, Geneva, 2020, p.19.

in humanitarian coordination efforts has only become more important in recent times, especially as emphasis has been put on working as a collective by WHS and Grand Bargain commitments. **Compared to coordination responsibilities, the CLA's leadership role is less well understood**.[49] Particularly in view of the formative aspect of this evaluation,[50] the leadership role appears to deserve considerable attention and further investment on the part of UNICEF.

The importance of leadership is easily explained by the structure of the humanitarian community and its way of operating. While the authority and responsibility to lead and coordinate humanitarian assistance rests with the governments of crisis-affected countries,[51] it is the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) at the global level and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) at the country level who are mandated to lead international humanitarian efforts in all non-refugee settings. But their authority and leverage over other stakeholders in the inter-agency setting is limited. Similarly, the CLA (or the cluster coordinator) can only set

goals and directions with the agreement of the cluster partners. The cluster is not a mechanism that can be managed by command and control. **Decision-making happens through consultation and participation. It follows that leadership is critical in providing ideas and plans, engaging partners in collective exchanges and proposing meaningful shared or common directions**.[52]

The **importance of leadership was not immediately recognized** by a number of key informants. In fact, the evaluation team had to explain in several interviews and meetings how leadership is a particular CLA responsibility. Asked about leadership, conversations quickly moved into issues of overall cluster functioning, general humanitarian practices or coordination challenges. While cluster leadership is influenced by these variables, and thus not immediately recognized as a key issue by everyone, it does not excuse UNICEF as CLA from prioritizing leadership. On the contrary, this evaluation found **overwhelming evidence that UNICEF has not given leadership the consideration it requires**. Giving direction,

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49 The global evaluation of UNICEF WASH programming in protracted crises (2014–2019) attaches similar importance to leadership and refers to it also as "thought leadership". It notes, for example, that "In practice, coordination tended to focus on operational issues rather than on providing leadership that encourages a long-term perspective". United Nations Children's Fund, 'Global Evaluation of UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programming in Protracted Crises, 2014–2019', UNICEF, New York, 2020, p.101. Another study on coordination looking at UNHCR's leadership and coordination shows that OCHA uses the terms coordination and leadership interchangeably (see United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR's Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response Settings', UNHCR, Geneva, 2019, p.15).

50 As requested by the ToR.

51 Several key informants noted that at the country level it is the government that leads or should lead the cluster and that for this reason, UNICEF should always be referred to as co-lead.

52 See also the definition of leadership as provided in the GNC, 'Competency Framework for Cluster Coordination'.

developing vision, proposing strategy and, especially, demonstrating behaviour that is conducive to broad input and active engagement are key aspects of leadership. The three sources of information available to the evaluation (documents, KIIs and the survey results) provide several indications covering these aspects, but not to the extent required given the importance of the issue of leadership.

3.2 Where does CLA leadership sit?

Before delving further into the criticality of CLA leadership, it is important to explain where it 'sits' in relation to the clusters. The evaluation team asked itself the question, "Who in UNICEF actually fulfils the CLA role: the cluster coordinator, the global cluster coordination unit, the country representative, the regional director, EMOPS, Programme Division, or all of the above?" Assuming that all six parts have a CLA (leadership) role, how do their different CLA roles and responsibilities relate? The essential issue to keep in mind is that even with the best structures in place, mindset and behaviour matter at least as much.

Examining the question of who in UNICEF fulfils the CLA role touches on a wider issue: the perspective that the agency takes in fulfilling its CLA mandate. A coordination and leadership role on behalf of the collective requires the entity that has this role to think about the interests of the collective, i.e., beyond what is in it for them. At the same time, the agency's interests and (internal) systems may be geared toward its individual agency objectives, something

that has generally been seen in UNICEF. When the agency's interests are aligned with those of the collective, there is no issue, but when they are not, the agency's agenda is likely to prevail, with the result that the leadership and coordination role is de-prioritized. Currently, **when there is alignment of individual agency and collective interests**, this alignment often appears to be thanks to individual efforts, and not as part of an organization-wide strategic effort.

Cluster coordinators

Cluster coordinators have become the personification of the CLA. In fact, it is a key leadership position and should be recognized as such. Cluster coordinators are required to play a neutral role in the interest of the collective, while at the same time ensuring that their 'home agency', UNICEF, is fully engaged and offers its expertise and wisdom to the collective without dominating the cluster. **Many of cluster coordinators, whether at global or country levels, recognized and explained the criticality of leadership**. Several of them, at global and country levels, noted that they have to ensure an open atmosphere that encourages an inclusive and participatory approach, and that their leadership role is "basically to facilitate the process of strategic thinking by cluster partners and facilitate the response". A number of them also noted that they rely specifically on the cluster's strategic advisory group (SAG) as the mechanism for consultation and to exchange ideas. The view of this evaluation is that leadership does not sit with one individual, but is a team effort.

By their strategic nature, SAGs, which exist globally and in a number of countries (though not everywhere), could be seen as a model for a leadership team.

While the concept of collective leadership holds promise (see below section 3.4), many cluster coordinators noted that, by and large, moving the cluster forward, deciding on the focus, way of working, and priorities (e.g. strategy or day-to-day coordination) is left to them and that they feel rather isolated in their jobs. This lonely feeling is an ironic one, as the cluster coordinator should have support from across UNICEF and be central to everything the agency does in humanitarian action. But the lack of support, as they perceive it, appears to come from UNICEF's level of interest (or lack thereof) in the clusters. Cluster coordinators noted that UNICEF's focus is primarily internal, instead of being concerned with the overall and collective response. Coordinators see **a general lack of interest from the agency in their cluster coordination and leadership responsibilities**. As stated by one cluster coordinator: "I can feel the pressure on me. My fear is that as soon as I am gone, they will scrap my position and get a double-hatted coordinator like with the other UNICEF clusters. I used to advocate a lot, but now I have given up as I do not want to waste my energy fighting with UNICEF over the importance to have full-time dedicated cluster coordinators and to try and make them see their CLA responsibilities." Conversely, the evaluation also noted that cluster partners may have specific (or unrealistic) expectations of cluster coordinators, which may or may not correspond to the priorities of UNICEF as the CLA.

One important aspect that also seems to fall on the shoulders of cluster coordinators is what in UNICEF terminology is called 'inter-sectorality', the effort to work across cluster boundaries and the sectors' technical silos to ensure complementary and synergies, if not integrated approaches. Efforts have been made both at global and country levels to work in an inter-cluster fashion, for example among nutrition and WASH, together with the non-UNICEF led clusters of health and shelter, or between child protection and education. Yet many key informants felt that despite these initiatives, more needs to be done to avoid the silo mentality between clusters. Such deeper efforts would require others involved in cluster leadership to also play their part.

Another leadership issue for cluster coordinators is what to do if there is a significant change of circumstances in a country, including the outbreak of political violence or armed hostilities in at least part of the territory. Some of the countries referred to by key informants have seen such events in recent years, with government forces being one of the (warring) parties. Having the government representatives closely involved in, or leading, the clusters in such situations raises questions around the core humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. While cluster coordinators, in consultation with cluster partners, will have a say in how to redefine the role of the government in the cluster, they will also depend on others in UNICEF and the inter-agency context to define the (new) terms of engagement with the government.

The global cluster coordination unit (GCCU)

The GCCU holds a key role when it comes to leadership, as **it can potentially leverage UNICEF's CLA role in relation to the four clusters**. As highlighted by numerous key informants at both global and country levels, by being CLA for four clusters/sub-clusters, UNICEF has more CLA responsibilities than any other agency, which also means that it could be a particularly strong player at the collective level. The GCCU is responsible for connecting the cluster coordinators with everything that goes on with EMOPS and other divisions in UNICEF, and vice versa. It is the bridge between UNICEF's interest as an agency and what it does as CLA for the collective at the global level. In addition, having a coordination role for three clusters and an AoR also implies that it could play a key role in working on 'inter-sectorality.' It is precisely on this issue that the GCCU could take a more visible and prominent role vis-à-vis OCHA, for example. In addition, some have made suggestions that **'mini-GCCUs' could be established at the country or regional level in UNICEF offices**. Given that such a new unit might become a new layer in an already overcrowded coordination space, the evaluation team has some reservations. Strengthening inter-sectoral approaches and/or accountability for cluster coordination can be achieved in other ways.

Country office representative

At the country level, the UNICEF representative holds a key role with regard to the clusters. S/he decides on the staffing of the cluster coordination positions, for example, including where the financial resources for these roles should come from. Likewise, the representative has line management responsibility over the cluster coordinators, although they can decide to delegate this role. They are also strongly advised to "periodically attend cluster and AOR meetings".[53] In practice, the evaluation team saw a number of different approaches to the CLA role by representatives, with different

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53   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Cluster Coordination Guidance for Country Offices', UNICEF, Geneva, 2015, p.24.

outcomes in terms of cluster dynamics and achievements. One interviewee noted that, despite being part of the cluster for five years, "I have never seen the Rep in a meeting. It would be interesting to see the Rep in a meeting once or twice a year". **In countries where the representative could be seen taking an active interest and role in relation to the clusters** – for example by meeting regularly with coordinators prior to HCT meetings or taking a strong stance in terms of hiring dedicated staff for the CLA role – there has been a positive effect in terms of cluster activity and engagement. Cluster coordinators not only feel an expectation to deliver, but also that they have been given the profile and recognition to provide leadership and move things forward.

The CLARE I evaluation noted the existence of different reporting structures in different country offices, and that **direct reporting lines to a representative can help ensure that cluster issues are clearly communicated to an HCT**. The CLARE I evaluation also noted that a representative's ability and willingness to represent these issues depended on their understanding of the CLA role. Crucially, this evaluation found that internal reporting lines remain an important **obstacle to UNICEF successfully carrying out its CLA role**.[54] The country office has a significant level of

authority to decide on reporting lines of cluster coordinators. In spite of the general directive that country-based cluster coordinators report to the representative, UNICEF's cluster guidance to country offices also notes that variations to this reporting line are possible.[55] It also notes that "the decision on the best option for direct line management of UNICEF-led cluster and AoR coordinators will be taken at country level, based on an analysis of the context and capacities, and on taking into account a number of considerations such as the level of the emergency". In practice, however, among the eight country contexts that the evaluation looked at more specifically, cluster coordinators reported to the representative only in two. In three countries, they reported to the respective chief of section, and in the rest to the head of section for emergencies or the chief of field operations.

Where alternative reporting lines are in place and little transparency exists on the justification for these alternatives, it feeds the perception that **representatives take little interest in the clusters**, resulting in a feeling of being undervalued on the part of the coordinators. In countries reviewed by the evaluation wherecluster coordinators reported to the chief of section, respondents tended to find cluster affairs to be 'de-prioritized' at the expense of UNICEF-specific interests.

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54   Based on the systematic coding of country-level key informant interviews.
55   "Cluster coordinators are employed by or seconded to UNICEF and report to the country representative or his/her designate."
      UNICEF, 'Cluster Coordination Guidance for Country Offices', p.22.

Where cluster coordinators do not report to the UNICEF representative, but rather to the head of emergencies or the relevant UNICEF section head, they may benefit from the technical guidance the section has to offer. However, it also means that cluster concerns do not automatically filter up to the senior (political) level.[56] As one senior key informant noted, this creates a further disconnect between the political, HCT level, and the working or technical level, something that this evaluation encountered in some countries. One cluster coordinator, for example, explained that the HCT in their country had been focused on a completely different region than the clusters and inter-cluster mechanism. In theory, the representative is expected to bring concerns raised by the (four) clusters to the HCT. The degree to which this happens in practice, however, is another matter.[57] As signalled in another recent evaluation,[58] this issue requires more attention and transparency. **To ensure that the clusters' concerns make it to the HCT**, a number of key informants argued that each of the cluster coordinators should be in the HCT, at least when relevant, to represent the cluster, especially if the UNICEF representative does not feel they have the scope to carry the messages.[59] It has also been noted that advocacy from the cluster, and especially the CLA, might make a difference in raising the HCT's attention to an issue, especially in cases where the UNICEF representative seems unwilling to take cluster advocacy forward to the HCT.

Regional directors

The evaluation team also spoke with staff in UNICEF regional offices. The role of regional offices (ROs) with regard to the clusters is not immediately obvious, an issue also signalled in CLARE I. While the clusters exist globally and at the country level, there are no regional clusters. The regional director, however, holds an important position in ensuring that UNICEF representatives report on their responsibilities in overseeing the CLA role at the country level. In addition, UNICEF staff present at regional level are asked to provide support either on technical issues or on filling in or supporting staff positions in the clusters. Regional offices also approve staffing in country offices, which includes cluster staff. The evaluation team noted that several ROs are very active in ensuring that UNICEF lives up to its CLA responsibility, which is appreciated by the country-level coordinators. Given that regional directors have authority over country representatives, they can influence decisions at the country level, for example, on cluster coordination staff positions or on bringing cluster positions to the HCT.

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56 One reason cited why cluster coordinators do not report to the representative is apparently their position in the UN system, where a P3 might not have direct access to the representative.

57 Cluster coordinators can also bring their concerns to the attention of the HCT through the country-based inter-cluster coordination group.

58 See United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Contribution to Education in Humanitarian Settings', UNICEF, New York, 2020.

59 Reportedly, in a number of countries cluster coordinators attend HCT meetings.

EMOPS

Other parts of UNICEF also have a leadership role to play in terms of UNICEF's CLA responsibilities. The agency's emergency division, EMOPS, has line management responsibilities for the GCCU at the global level. It also represents UNICEF in the IASC and Emergency Directors Group (EDG), which enables it to bring any cluster-related policy or operational issues to these bodies. Whether or how it has used that role is not clear, also because communications within EMOPS, the GCCU, and global cluster coordinators may need attention. While at the working level, the GCCU and cluster coordinators have made important contributions on various policy issues, **this evaluation did not find evidence of UNICEF's (strategic) contributions in the IASC in ensuring that clusters remain fit-for-purpose**. One sign would have been UNICEF's views on the outdated 2006 IASC cluster guidance. Clearly, leadership on this guidance sits with the IASC, chaired by OCHA, but UNICEF could – if not should – have noticed how much its **CLA practices are out of sync with that guidance**, not because those practices are wrong, but because the textbook is in need of an update.

Programme staff

Technical or 'programme' staff also have a special role when it comes to the organization's CLA function. All of UNICEF's technical sections have humanitarian experts participating in each of the four clusters at the global and country levels. They represent UNICEF, just as other

EQ8: Has UNICEF as CLA taken steps to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit-for-purpose in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space)?

cluster participants represent their agencies, but because of the CLA role, and UNICEF's vast technical capacity and expertise, they have a significant leadership role content-wise.

The evaluation team heard a variety of views from key informants with regard to **technical contributions to the clusters by UNICEF programme staff**. Some stressed the relevance and importance of the technical contributions from UNICEF, noting that there is no other agency that has so much expertise available. Others were less positive, usually for one of two reasons: either they perceived UNICEF as imposing its vision on the cluster's direction and technical questions, or they expressed the view that UNICEF could contribute more to content, as they are currently seeing a somewhat half-hearted involvement from UNICEF's programme specialists in the cluster.

The evaluation team also heard that programme staff contributions do not always benefit the cluster or may complicate the work of the coordinator. In one country cluster, the UNICEF section chief reportedly expected the cluster coordinator to represent their views, indicating a **conflation of roles**. In another country, a cluster coordinator explained that cluster

partners understood much better than UNICEF colleagues that the coordinator is there to represent the cluster and not UNICEF as an agency. As this coordinator put it: "When there is information to provide from the UNICEF section to the cluster, they always ask me to do it, and it's a problem. Okay, I can help out and explain processes, but I can't write the proposal for them! And often they don't come to cluster meetings, thinking that I am there." The lack of full participation in cluster meetings by UNICEF programme specialists at country level lends itself to a perception of double-hatting, and complicates the efforts of the coordinator to navigate conflicts of interest.

The evaluation team also encountered examples where UNICEF cluster coordinators took very different views from those of programme participants. In one such example, a cluster coordinator steered the cluster toward a humanitarian approach with associated ways of working, while the UNICEF section representative remained in 'development mode' with a different perspective on the context and what needed to be done. In another country, a cluster partner explained that he was highly impressed by, and trusted, the cluster coordinator because they frequently took a different position to that of the UNICEF programme representative.

Participation of UNICEF programme representatives in the cluster is a delicate balancing act. If the programme representatives are on a different wavelength, it may negatively affect UNICEF's image. If they are too prominent in asserting content and direction

for the cluster, UNICEF may be seen as imposing its view. The option that remains for UNICEF is to be open and transparent about its agenda and intentions toward the entire cluster.

All the above-mentioned components of UNICEF have a part to play in providing leadership as CLA (see Figure 14). At this time, too much emphasis is placed on cluster coordinators, who do not receive sufficient institutional support from other parts of UNICEF. The evaluation found that this lack of support was not necessarily a matter of unwillingness, but the result of an **agency that has yet to recognize that its CLA role may have a greater impact in terms of achieving its humanitarian mission than the narrow pursuits of its individual agency mindset and focus**. Adjusting this perspective requires adjusting incentives, reformulating UNICEF's interests in terms of a broader common good, and restructuring internal guidelines and systems accordingly.

FIGURE 14
The shared leadership responsibility of the CLA
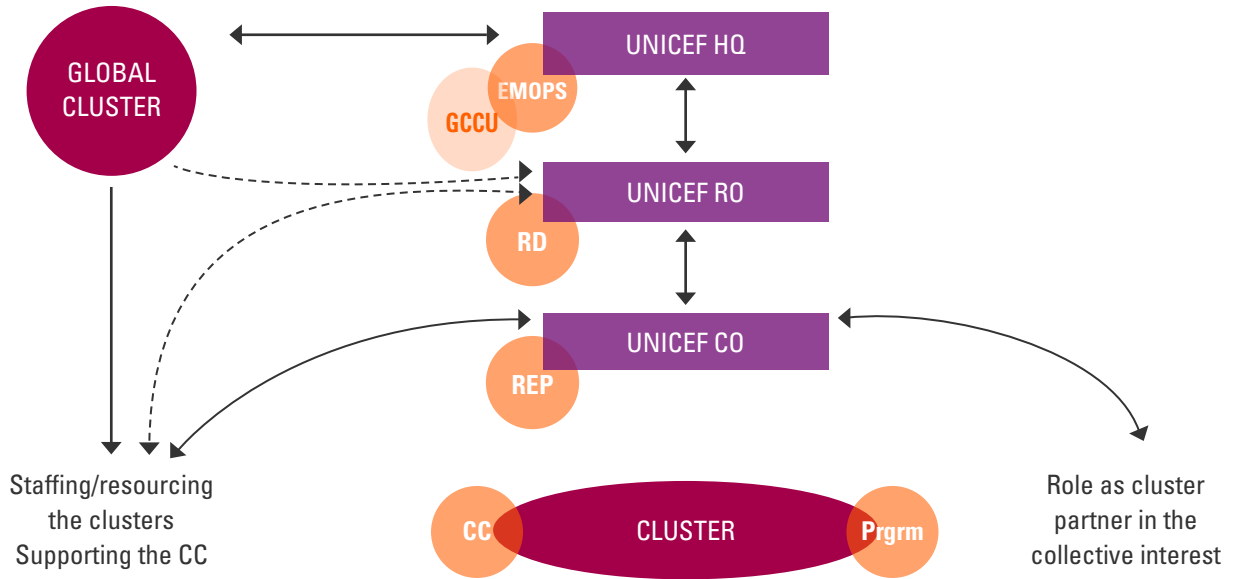
3.3 Leadership and cluster strategy

EQ6: Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?

EQ9: Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in emergency response?

Strategy formulation and a clear prioritization of tasks are essential components of leadership. They are also inherently challenging in a collective inter-agency environment. Cluster partners generally appreciated UNICEF's efforts in this regard, though 8.2 per cent of cluster partners disagreed or strongly disagreed that "cluster partners are appropriately included" in strategic planning, and a further 5.3 per cent were unsure. Perhaps unsurprisingly, cluster leads/coordinators had a more positive view than cluster partners on this issue (see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15
Survey responses – involvement in strategic planning

" UNICEF as CLA works to ensure the response in coordinated. "

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER LEADS/COORDINATORS

34%	54%	5.6%	2.4%	1.6%	2.4%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER PARTNERS

24%	52%	10.5%	6.2%	2%	5.3%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
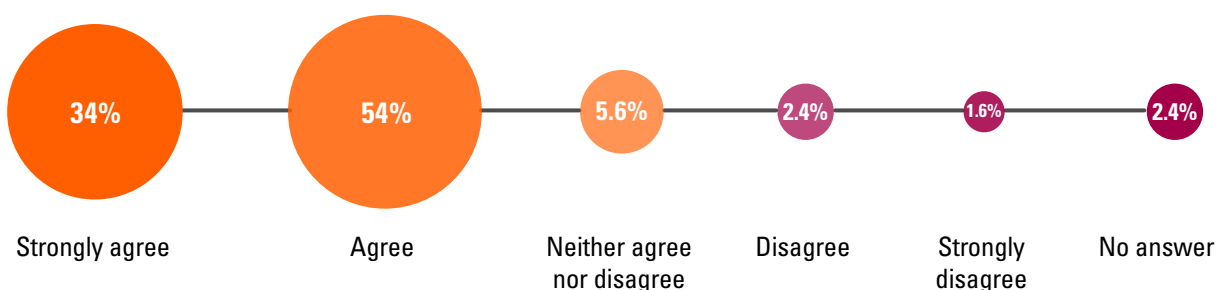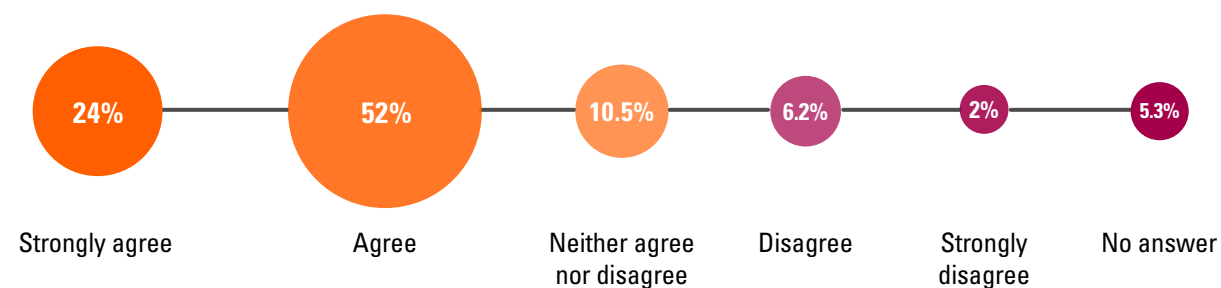
At the global level, all clusters have a strategy and a strategic advisory group in place. The cluster SAGs are the main mechanism to discuss and agree on strategy, work plans and other priorities. In a sense, the SAG is a leadership team. The GWC has been singled out by key informants as being particularly effective in using the collective wisdom of the SAG while working on vision and strategy. The "Humanitarian WASH Sector Road Map" sets a vision for 2025, lays out several strategic directions and is seen as a model by other

clusters. The SAG of the child protection AoR was also mentioned by some key informants as functioning well, with one key informant noting that this SAG is "basically a board where we are consulted on everything, brought in on decision-making, and have a feeling of joint ownership of the AoR's work". Key informants noted that for a number of the SAGs, the roles have become clearer and more structured in recent years. Others, however, were less positive. Some questioned the size of their SAGs. The GEC and CP AoR SAGs, for example, have 20 members or more, a large number if the role of this group is to draft strategic plans and other proposals. Key informants at country level meanwhile noted that their SAGs did not cover strategic issues but were rather working on day-to-day affairs. The evaluation also heard of examples in which (country-based) SAGs were heavily involved in the selection of HRP proposals and resource mobilization processes, which would drift away from **their strategic role**.

Similarly, several of the global clusters' strategies have a **multitude of priorities**, which is not surprising given that multiple stakeholders are involved, many of whom want to see their specific objectives reflected in a strategy document. One consideration for cluster coordinators might be to spell out for cluster members the trade-off between inclusion and a clearly articulated and limited set of objectives and priorities. Including a diverse group of agencies and actors in planning and decision-making has a cost.

The evaluation did encounter good practices in terms of strategy at the country level. In one country, for example, the CP sub-cluster has a strategic work plan drawn up at the beginning of each year, which is shared with the country-level SAG and the partners for discussion. The discussion is followed by a vote and the resulting strategy disseminated by the partners. In other countries and clusters, the situation is different. In some cases, key informants who were cluster participants (and even in some cases SAG members) were unaware of existing strategy documents.

Perhaps more importantly, the evaluation team reviewed several strategies that **looked more like a plan of action or work plan than a strategy** that sets a vision and objectives. This may be linked to the planning horizon of the clusters, which itself is often linked to short-term funding or the short humanitarian planning cycle in general. Other key informants linked it to the heavy workload, noting that they do not have the time to take a step back and look at longer-term strategic objectives.

It could be argued that part of demonstrating leadership is **creating space for strategic discussions and ways of working.** Such reflections should not be optional and pushed aside by day-to-day affairs. The evaluation team was struck by how **little time was taken to reflect within clusters** on questions such as how the cluster works best together, how to leverage the complementarity of agencies' comparative advantages or, importantly, on how the CLA can best serve the entire cluster.

3.4   Co- and collective leadership

> **EQ6:** Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?
>
> **EQ9:** Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in emergency response?

As noted, leadership of clusters is not the responsibility of one entity. This evaluation sees leadership as a collective effort in which each cluster partner has a responsibility to contribute proposals and suggest directions that work toward common objectives. Collective leadership is not a formalized concept as such in IASC cluster policy documents. It is, however, a concept that matches the spirit of partnership, which is a key aspect of the cluster approach, and the notion of a shared sense of purpose that it is critical to meaningful humanitarian coordination. This section covers **whether and how UNICEF as CLA has promoted collective leadership**.

Co-leadership

If practised well, co-leadership can be seen as an optimal arrangement that combines the concepts of partnership and collective leadership. As noted elsewhere, education is the only global cluster with a formal co-leadership arrangement between a United Nations agency and an NGO, and this is the subject of a parallel report. However, since co-leadership is frequently seen in all four clusters at the country level, it is also covered in this report.[60]

The 2012 IASC Transformative Agenda encourages CLAs "to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed and supported sharing of cluster leadership by NGOs wherever feasible".[61] The CLARE I evaluation touches on co-leadership arrangements mainly from a cost-benefit angle, finding them to have improved without providing an indication of how it understands co-leadership or giving further recommendations in this regard. However, the potential of co-leadership goes far beyond questions of value for money and efficiency.

Generally, UNICEF appears to be open to co-leadership arrangements at the country level.

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60   More detail, examples, forms, and variations of co-leadership arrangements will be provided in the GEC review.

61   See IASC, 'Transformative Agenda', 2012, para. 32. However, earlier (p.3.) the document also refers to the sharing of leadership responsibilities at the sub-national level. In other words, co-leadership at the national level is not an obligation. UNICEF explicitly recognizes the value of co-leadership in its Cluster Coordination Guidance for Country Offices, para 1.10: "The UNICEF representative is responsible for directly and proactively supporting co-leadership of clusters."

Among the countries looked at in more detail by the evaluation team, only one was found where the representative had ruled out co-leadership arrangements with NGOs. In this case, the UNICEF country office apparently deemed the sharing of leadership unfeasible, although the grounds for this assessment were not made clear, and other agencies, including OCHA, took a different view of the matter.

With regard to co-leadership practices, the evaluation encountered **mixed experiences**. To begin with **terminology**, there was a wide variation in how shared leadership arrangements at the country-level were described, including co-chairs/leads; chair and co-chair; co-coordinators; co-facilitators; and several other terms.[62] This was despite the fact that harmonization of language was suggested in the 2015 IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module and addressed to global cluster lead agencies.[63] The plethora of different arrangements at the country level may well be the result of the absence of clear global guidance.

The choice of terminology depends in part on how co-leadership is understood. Is it a matter of delegating tasks from the lead to the 'co-lead' or a matter of sharing, in which there are two co-leads? The first arrangement presumes a degree of authority of the lead over the co-lead, while the latter implies a relationship of equality. The delegation of tasks to the NGO co-lead may be at odds with the idea of shared or co-leadership. The evaluation heard a range of comments on this issue including, for example, a cluster co-lead saying, "UNICEF wants to dictate the agenda. It tries to set the direction without consulting us. It understands co-leadership as competition of who should be on the top." For the concept of co-leadership to be resolved in terms of roles, responsibilities and related accountabilities, it is critical that UNICEF puts the issue on the IASC agenda as a matter of priority.

Most striking is the evaluation's finding that in several situations, co-leaders (to use this term for ease) have **not even agreed on defining or describing their relationship on paper**. Several key informants noted that, in spite of their attempts, the UNICEF country office had refused to develop a memorandum of understanding (MoU) or similar document. For example, in one country UNICEF claimed that the co-leadership MoU had been signed at the global level and did not need to be replicated at the country level. Furthermore, the evaluation collected significant evidence to suggest that coordination arrangements referred to as co-leadership barely fit this concept for the simple

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62   One issue is translation. Some terms seem to be more in use in certain languages, e.g. "co-facilitateur" or "co-coordinateur/co-coordinatrice" in French.

63   See Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Guidelines: Cluster coordination at country level', IASC, Geneva, 2015, p. 21.

reason that they are merely a **practical division of (coordination) tasks without much, if any, leadership vision or roles involved**.

Moreover, delegating tasks because the cluster coordinator's plate is too full should not be regarded as co-leadership. The evaluation saw that such **pseudo-co-leadership arrangements** were particularly in use **when the cluster coordinator was double-hatted**. The evaluation encountered suboptimal co-leadership practices among NGOs as well. In some countries, it was observed that NGOs were keen to accept co-leadership roles without due consideration of their actual capacity to take on such a role. There was also tremendous variation in terms of how it was decided which NGO should take on a co-leadership role, and whether this should be a permanent or temporary undertaking. The practices of voting for a co-lead and of co-leadership rotation among NGOs were encountered in a number of countries.

One way to describe a prevalent form of co-leadership arrangement at the country level is in terms of **co-coordination**.[64] This arrangement implies that only one organization, i.e. UNICEF, is the CLA for accountability purposes and, as some key informants noted, "has the final say", but coordination responsibilities are shared and decisions are made in a consultative manner.

Collective leadership and soft skills

As noted, **collective leadership is about enabling cluster partners to bring their organizations' strengths to the collective response**, taking initiative, and proposing ideas and plans. The 2011 ALNAP study on humanitarian leadership describes it as the way forward in humanitarian coordination because it "unleashes collective potential through diffuse and collaborative ways of working, to a shared common purpose".[65]This understanding corresponds to how UNICEF considers leadership, at least formally: "In addition to instilling a shared vision and purpose, leadership also includes inspiring people, empowering people (including affected populations), promoting principles and care and being proactive and adaptive to change".[66] Promoting leadership systematically in this way could be seen as an innovative way of working.

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64 The evaluation came across one recent initiative from UNHCR in its capacity as CLA for protection to agree with NGOs on standard ToRs for co-coordination arrangements.

65 Buchanan-Smith, Margie and Kim Scriven, 'Leadership in Action: Leading effectively in humanitarian operations', ALNAP, London, 2011.

66 Comment from EMOPS on CLARE II draft inception report, September 2020.

The CLARE I evaluation found that "UNICEF cluster coordination practices are generally strong and enhance collective accountability and shared responsibility". Collective leadership fits closely with **partnership**, one of the three elements that underpins the clusters.[67] The way in which UNICEF as CLA approaches partnership was generally appreciated by key informants, and appears strong to the evaluation team. In other words, cluster practice may amount to collective leadership without calling it such. The evaluation found **evidence of collective leadership** in the clusters, especially at the global level, and occasionally at the country level. In some of the global clusters, such as the CP AoR, NGO alliances (in this case the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action) have played increasingly important roles. Others cited a SAG as an example of collective leadership.

On the ground, key informants pointed to some good examples of a collective atmosphere, noting for example that cluster partners are given opportunities to participate, not only in terms of presenting their activities, but also **providing substantive contributions to ideas and strategies**. In answer to the question of whether UNICEF as CLA is promoting innovative approaches or initiatives,

EQ7: Is UNICEF as CLA promoting innovative approaches and initiatives?

respondents frequently highlighted that the coordinator encourages partners to contribute thoughts and ideas.[68] It is noteworthy that a large majority of respondents connected the collective leadership of the clusters to the initiative of individuals rather than formal systems for collective leadership. For example, a partner informant from one country said the cluster was well led largely thanks to the individual efforts of the coordinator, who "has a good approach in building ownership" and "has a big network and good reputation which brings partners together quickly". It is noteworthy that while this individual was greatly appreciated by all cluster partners with whom the evaluation team spoke, the coordinator in question did not feel that the collective approach was supported by the UNICEF country office.

The evaluation team also came across the view that the **concept of collective leadership** makes little sense, as it is seen to dilute the CLA's accountability. Others said they were unsure of what collective leadership means in the context of the clusters.

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67 The other two are predictability and accountability.
68 Other than this point, the evaluation team saw very little in terms of evidence of innovative approaches taken by UNICEF as CLA. It should be noted that respondents frequently gave the example of the introduction of remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic as innovative approaches taken within the cluster, though it was unclear whether this was primarily thanks to UNICEF as CLA, or a general tendency in the humanitarian community and elsewhere.

The **2020 GNC *Competency Framework for Cluster Coordination,*** developed by the GNC but now used by all UNICEF-led clusters, is highly relevant in understanding and explaining collective leadership. It lists a set of core competencies crucial to collective leadership that largely cover working with others in mutually enhancing and beneficial ways. The importance the framework attaches to leadership skills and behaviours seems a step ahead of what has generally been policy and practice in the CLA until recently.[69] The evaluation also found that recent recruitments of the GWC were done using the competency framework. Further promoting the framework, together with strengthened cluster training on leadership and behavioural skills, would constitute a significant step forward in what a number of key informants described as recruiting the "right person for the job".[70]

Building on the work done by the GNC, UNICEF should clarify how it understands collective leadership and promote a harmonized approach across the clusters it leads, in consultation with cluster partners.

3.5   Varied perceptions of accountability

The 2006 IASC guidelines on the cluster approach first laid out the expectations and accountabilities for cluster leads. It was intended "to be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary, taking into account the conclusions of further lessons learned exercises and evaluations of implementation of the cluster approach at both the global and country level".[71]   While the generic terms of reference for cluster leads at country level and the main areas of responsibilities laid out in the 2006 guidelines remain largely the same, other documents outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for cluster lead agencies and cluster coordinators have been issued. Additional roles and responsibilities have been clarified for cluster leads, for example, in the 2015 *IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level and in the 2011 IASC Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities.*[72]   The 2012 Transformative Agenda sought to strengthen accountability of those holding coordination responsibilities and

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69 This is not to say the GNC competency framework is perfect in its present form. For example, the definition of partnership in the framework is: "Builds a network of external stakeholders and alliances with government partners, civil society, the media and the private sector, in order to promote and advance the work of the organization." (p. 31). The evaluation team would argue that the role of those in coordination positions is "to promote and advance the work of the *collective*".

70 When this qualification was unpacked in some interviews, it appeared that key informants were particularly pointing at skills related to partnership and collective leadership.

71 IASC, 'Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response'.

72 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities', IASC, Geneva, 2011. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level', IASC, Geneva, 2015.

focused on 'mutual accountability', in which members of the various mechanisms such as the HCT and clusters would hold each other to account with respect to their commitments.

The result of the evolving roles and responsibilities is a **messy patchwork of cluster 'doctrine'** that makes it difficult to clearly articulate accountabilities for CLAs. This lack of clarity is compounded by the conflation between the personal and the institutional: cluster partners often see cluster leadership personified in the cluster coordinator(s) as opposed to the CLA. In a similar vein, it is not always clear where the accountabilities of the CLA leave off and those of the wider cluster (or the response as a whole) begin. For example, on the narrower question of the extent to which UNICEF contributes to the overall accountability of the emergency response, survey respondents were generally quite positive: 45 per cent agreed and 29 per cent strongly agreed that UNICEF contributes to greater accountability in the emergency response (Figure 16).

FIGURE 16
Survey responses – accountability

UNICEF as CLA contributes to greater accountability in the emergency response.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES

| 29% | 45% | 15% | 4% | 3% | 4% |
| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | No answer |
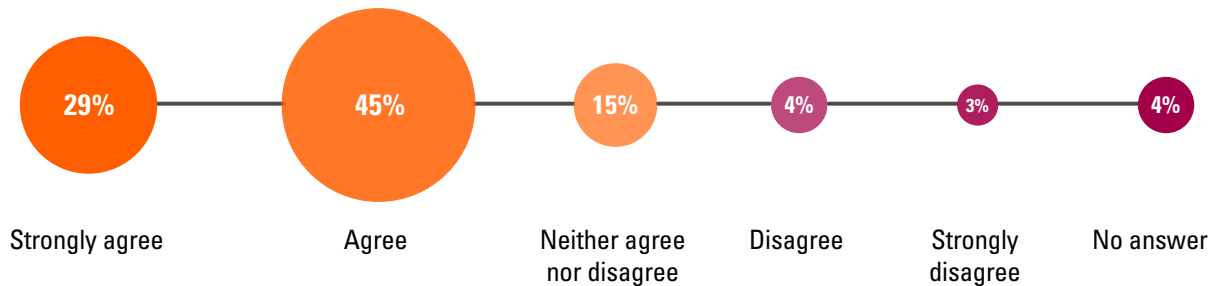
Key informant interviews, however, revealed a more mixed picture on broader questions of accountability, with many key informants indicating this was an area in need of improvement. Key informants identified **a range of accountability lines,** including to affected populations; to cluster partners; to HCs; to national authorities; internally within UNICEF; and to the ERC at the global level. In principle, cluster lead agencies are accountable to the ERC at global level and the HC at country level. However, the effectiveness of these reporting lines is not always evident. In practice, the authority of the ERC or HC over individual agencies is limited.

Both globally and at country level, **accountability can remain elusive** if underperformance and cluster-leadership are not connected. Rarely – if ever – has an HC withdrawn the CLA role from a United Nations agency at the country level, which could suggest that there have been no cases of significant underperformance since the clusters' roll-out in 2006. In practice, the leverage that the ERC globally or an HC at the country level have is limited to asking key questions to the CLA and discussing matters with various coordination bodies following reporting from the CLA on the way they have fulfilled their responsibilities. In addition, the fact that clusters have multiple accountability lines, e.g. also to national authorities and affected populations, further complicates accountability in terms of implementing the concept, with the result that many of these accountabilities remain primarily on paper.

At country level, HCs often have little direct interaction with the clusters. In one of the focus countries examined by the evaluation, a dedicated CLA forum has been constituted by OCHA that provides more direct interaction. Here, the heads of CLAs come together with OCHA and the HC, usually before HCT meetings. Asked about the reason for creating this forum, it was noted that the HCT includes the donors and "no one wants to bring up problems and internal issues before their donors". A critique of this forum noted that the mechanism does not involve the cluster coordinators, making it difficult for coordinators to defend the mechanism's decisions to their respective cluster partners.

The **cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM) tool** could be a useful proxy indicator for the CLA's accountability, but for this it would need to allow for qualitative analysis of what works and what does not. Instead, it is currently highly process-oriented, looking at a plethora of cluster activities in a box-ticking manner, which does not help to arrive at a clear indication of whether or not the CLA is meeting its leadership responsibilities. While workshops are supposed to follow up and dig deeper into the answers to the CCPM questionnaire, the questions in the survey are not geared toward gauging how the CLA is carrying out its CLA leadership responsibilities. Whether the follow-up workshops arrive at such a conclusion is not clear, as there is no global analysis of the findings across all the CCPM results.[73]

Provider of last resort, first resort, or still misunderstood?

Linked to the issue of CLA accountability is the responsibility of the CLA to step in as a "provider of last resort" (POLR). This concept was introduced in 2006; shortly thereafter, in 2008, the IASC issued operational guidelines that qualified and "clarified" the concept. The original CLARE evaluation found the following in relation to POLR:[74]

Cluster staff and partners have a widely differing understanding of what the provider of last resort (POLR) concept entails. Many internal and external key informants see UNICEF as sometimes playing a 'provider of first resort' role when resources are available, especially in clusters where the vast majority of participants are also UNICEF implementing partners. The original POLR concept was found, in the evaluation, to be largely meaningless given the 2008 revisions to its definition – 'depending on access, security and availability of funding' – which can be used to explain almost all operational gaps. Yet, ambiguities in partner and staff understanding of the POLR concept may result in a significant divergence of expectations and may also challenge partnership management.

The situation described in CLARE I has essentially not evolved since 2013. Not surprisingly, therefore, the evaluation found that the **POLR responsibility remains inconsistently addressed by UNICEF**.[75] Key informants had very little to say about the concept in general. Some know what it meant, but noted they were unaware of it having ever been invoked. Others interviewed had never heard of the POLR concept. There were not enough survey respondents aware of the POLR concept to answer the related question. Many

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73 Reportedly, workshops take place related to the CCPM, which allow the clusters to reflect on key issues in terms of their ways of working and performance.
74 UNICEF, CLARE I, p.36.

other key informants, however, explained that it had been invoked, but could rarely give examples or explain why.

Inconsistencies in how UNICEF applies the concept of POLR were identified. As one key informant put it, "we either strong arm someone into doing it or by giving funds or in the most extreme cases, doing it ourselves". In one country, for example, third-party contractors were hired for health programmes and to cover life-saving programmes, though it was not clear if that was to cover UNICEF programmes and/or gaps identified by clusters. Similarly, in several focus countries, UNICEF also has its rapid response mechanism (RRM) in place, which was seen by some interviewees as part of the POLR responsibility. Through the RRM mechanism UNICEF and partners respond to the most pressing needs, often in a multi-sectoral way. However, the RRM mechanism is mostly kept separate from the clusters, also because of its inter-sectoral character, and so its relevance to the POLR concept is unclear. Very few interviewees referred to this mechanism overall.

In other cases, the POLR concept was approached first and foremost from a funding perspective. If the funds were not immediately available within UNICEF, some cluster coordinators quickly rejected the POLR role on the grounds that they did not have available funds. Others, however, felt that funding should not be the starting point, as that would be 'putting the horse behind the carriage'. The first instinct of a successful POLR should be to find ways to fill gaps with cluster partners before moving to the last resort of seeking funds to invoke the POLR. An added challenge was UNICEF's limited role in service delivery: "How do you position yourself as POLR when you do not do direct service delivery? … We need to find ways forward on this… But this is something for HQ and the global cluster level, to come up with a strategy". In still other cases, the POLR was seen as being taken very seriously by UNICEF if funds were not available. For example, "latrine desludging was a critical gap and we have been doing it for all of last year; but now we have shortage of money. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) had an open proposal at the time with the country-based pooled fund, so we negotiated for the money to go to IOM and they will do the latrine desludging now as POLR".

There is also a lack of clarity about where the POLR responsibility sits, as indicated both by interviewees and survey respondents. Some suggested the cluster – not UNICEF – should be the "responder of last resort". Co-leadership situations present another challenge. For example, in one co-leadership situation, UNICEF complained the co-lead was not stepping up to be POLR, but **this role**

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75 This matches the findings of the *Global Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH Programming in Protracted Crises, 2014–2019*, which states that, "The role UNICEF plays as provider of last resort (POLR) is interpreted differently across countries and is crippling UNICEF's ability to be effective in some countries." (p. 36).

was not clearly defined in the division of roles and responsibilities. One stakeholder suggested that the POLR would be reinforced by co-leadership: "You will be working closely with one of your strong implementing partners sitting next to you and working with you. So it would make POLR on the ground faster and more relevant". Others felt that the **POLR role could not be shared.**

This **inconsistency in approach to POLR** needs to be addressed. The concept itself is fraught with issues, making a common and consistent understanding of it extremely complicated. UNICEF would be well advised to seek to clarify the principle and cluster responsibility through the IASC.

3.6 Other leadership commitments and achievements

Leadership is a key feature when it comes to charting ways forward, setting directions, and proposing new ways of working given changes in context or new policy trends and commitments. This evaluation looked at four humanitarian policy commitments which were deemed to be particularly relevant:

- The centrality of protection (CoP);

- Accountability to affected populations (AAP);

- The humanitarian-development nexus (HD nexus or HDN); and

- The localization of aid.

This evaluation team found, again, mixed perspectives on how much these four areas have been promoted by UNICEF within clusters.[76] Some interviewees felt that all four issues are well promoted within the cluster, thanks to the cluster lead, and others said the issues were a mere afterthought in cluster discussions, if raised at all. This variation suggests a lack of consistent guidance on from UNICEF how to approach such commitments through the cluster. Put differently, while there is **guidance from the four global clusters** supporting the four policy issues, there is generally limited **direction from UNICEF as CLA,** including from representatives, for the clusters to implement and prioritize these four policy commitments. In other words, while it should be the CLA's responsibility to work toward these commitments in collaboration with the cluster, the reality is that, once again, much depends on the coordinator's individual interpretation of the issue. The result is significant variations in how the four commitments are pursued in country-level clusters.

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76 Generally, survey respondents were more positive in this regard than interviewees. This variation is potentially due to the fact that the interview format gave the respondent the opportunity to clarify exactly what the question was about. And indeed, the questions in the survey around these issues solicited relatively high figures of uncertain answers (see Figures 15-17).

Advocacy and the centrality of protection

EQ4: Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the centrality of protection?

EQ12: Has UNICEF led on advocacy efforts in line with its CLA responsibilities?

The centrality of protection (CoP) is an aspect of humanitarian action where leadership is particularly important. This commitment states that protection should be a primary consideration in everything humanitarian organizations do, and not an afterthought or add-on. It involves rights-based advocacy, which may put humanitarian leaders at odds with governments or other stakeholders, especially when duty-bearers do not respect or uphold international norms and standards.[77]

In other words, implementing the centrality of protection involves taking risks, as duty-bearers may not welcome critiques of their conduct.

Of the four UNICEF-led clusters, the child protection AoR has the advantage of being protection-focused. Its efforts were singled out by respondents, for example, in relation to strong statements made in condemning attacks on schools. Overall, however, evidence was mixed. Analysis of key informant interviews indicated that respondents from WASH and child protection saw UNICEF as being more active in implementing the CoP commitment than respondents from the two other clusters (see Figure 18).[78] For some of the global clusters, key informants said they were unsure if UNICEF as CLA has defined CoP as a priority. At country level, experience was variable. When CoP was part of cluster discussions, it was not clear if the priority came from UNICEF as CLA.

The evaluation also encountered **differing views as to whether or not the clusters as such should engage in advocacy**. This disagreement seems to stem from the fact that many organizations, especially NGOs, feel more safe when advocacy is done collectively and/or led by a United Nations agency, out of fear of retaliation. Several NGO interviewees said that they looked to UNICEF to take the lead and provide a leadership role on behalf of the

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77 As noted by the 2020 UNICEF Humanitarian Review, "UNICEF's advocacy activities are too often mixed with efforts to boost organizational fundraising and/or visibility. UNICEF must clearly define its advocacy aims separately from its communication on fundraising." (United Nations Children's Fund, 'Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action: The humanitarian review – Findings and recommendations', UNICEF, New York, 2020, p.56.

78 Figure 16 has been established based on the systematic coding of all key informant interview notes, and shows the percentages per cluster of the number of instances where informants made positive comments with regard to how UNICEF as CLA has approached the centrality of protection. The question on how UNICEF as CLA has approached the centrality of protection was part of the standard guidance for KIIs.

collective. One country-level key informant, for example, expressed appreciation for UNICEF's role, as they saw UNICEF as having a stronger voice for protection than other protection-mandated agencies. This role, they said, is "to UNICEF's credit as they have supported protection much more than the agency that has deep protection experience and especially in the face of a strongly-politicized environment, where protection needs were unspoken for many years". Others, however, raised contrasting views, with a key informant noting that UNICEF could do more in this area as it has less to fear in terms of 'retaliation from the government'. The evaluation heard examples of efforts of protection-related advocacy by the cluster or by cluster partners which were not followed or supported by UNICEF. At a minimum, UNICEF could (or should) raise advocacy messages from the clusters in the HCT or with the government. The evaluation also heard examples of how UNICEF leaves it to the cluster, including the coordinator, to work on CoP.

Some also noted that advocacy is something that would **benefit from the complementarity of roles and responsibilities in the cluster,** especially when there is a co-leadership arrangement. One key informant noted that "advocacy is another example of success of our co-leadership, as the two co-leads have different attitudes and roles towards the government. UNICEF is better connected, but more cautious. We have more freedom, can be more pushy, and more intensive. The use of these two modalities brings results to the sector and to the cluster".

These positive views were echoed by survey respondents, as well as cluster leads/coordinators and cluster partners, who tended to agree that UNICEF as CLA supports robust advocacy and works to ensure positive results for the commitment to CoP (see Figure 17). Nevertheless, the prevailing view among interviewees was that CoP and protection mainstreaming should be improved in UNICEF-led clusters.

Overall, **the evaluation team did not find much evidence to suggest that protection is central to the work of all clusters**. To use the example of the condemnations of attacks on schools, ironically, the education cluster was much less involved in such statements. This, in turn, raises the question whether UNICEF as CLA has made **any particular efforts to promote CoP**. In general, the evaluation found that more scrutiny on this issue is required.[79]

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79   The global protection cluster is currently reviewing the implementation of the centrality of protection.

FIGURE 17
Survey responses – advocacy and the centrality of protection

> " UNICEF as CLA works to ensure the cluster supports robust advocacy, including calling on duty-bearers to fulfil their responsibilities. "

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER LEADS/COORDINATORS
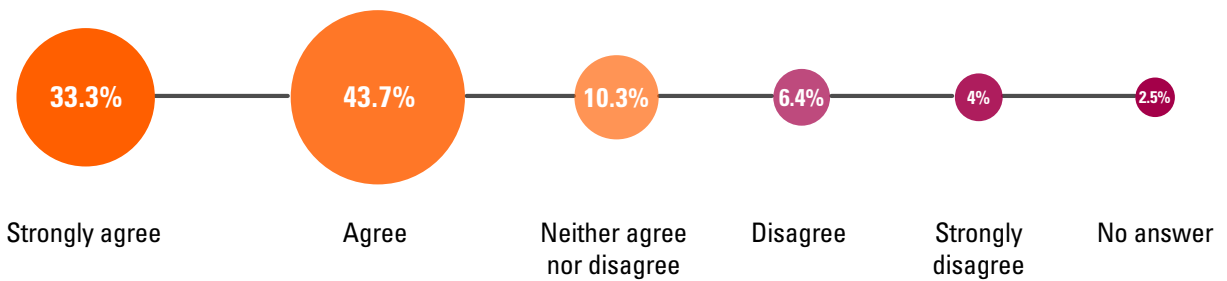
33.3%	43.7%	10.3%	6.4%	4%	2.5%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER PARTNERS

30.7%	44%	14%	6.6%	2.4%	2.4%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
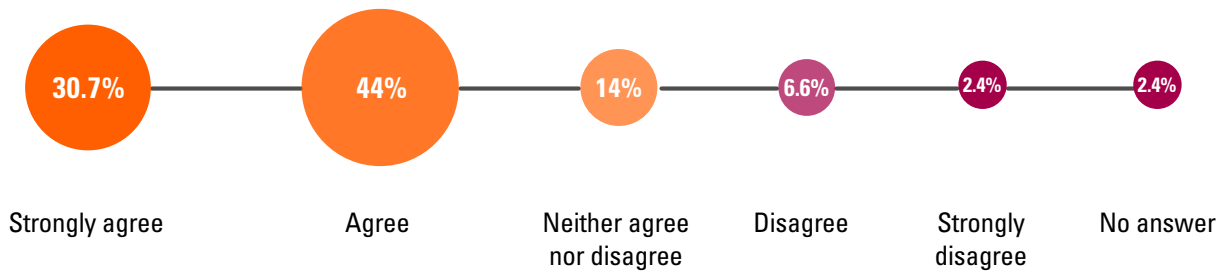
> The way in which UNICEF carries out its CLA responsibilities leads to positive results vis-à-vis the centrality of protection.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER LEADS/COORDINATORS

28.7%	49%	8%	4%	2.4%	8%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
RESPONSES FROM CLUSTER PARTNERS

27.5%	47%	12.5%	3.9%	1.6%	7.5%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
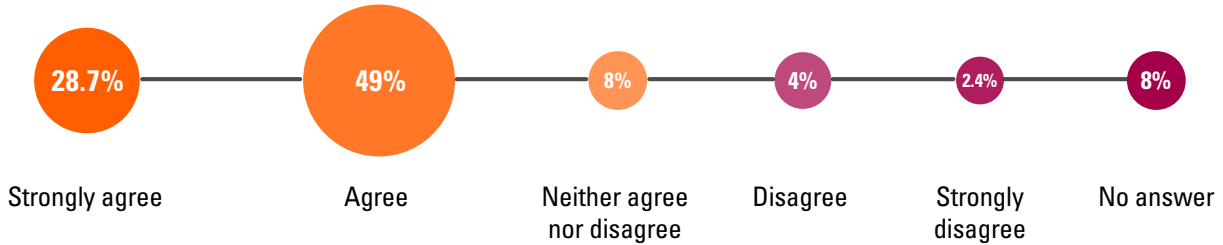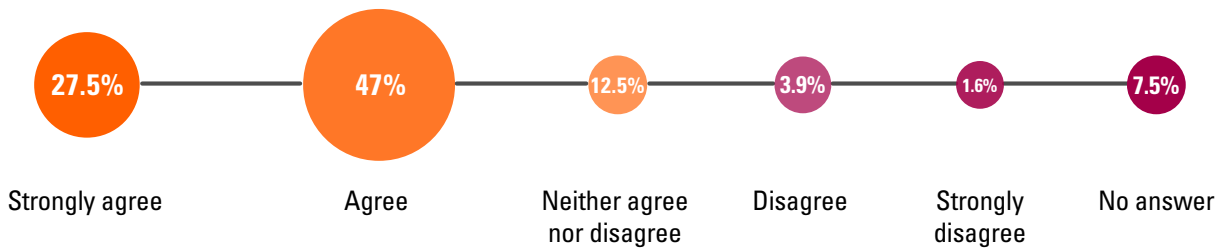
Accountability to affected populations (AAP)

EQ4: Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitment to AAP?

AAP is an area that seems to have caused some confusion as to where it 'sits' at an inter-agency level. There is much on paper about AAP. For example, AAP is the "+1" function added by the IASC to the original six core cluster functions at country level in the 2015 cluster reference module. UNICEF signed up to the five IASC commitments on accountability to affected populations in 2011 and the revised commitments in 2017, which reflect commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit.[80] At the country level, "a collective

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80   See the IASC commitments at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-revised-aap-commitments-2017-including-guidance-note-and-resource-list

FIGURE 18
Interview responses – centrality of protection

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL INTERVIEWS, PER CLUSTER

27.6%
WASH

34.5%
Child
Protection
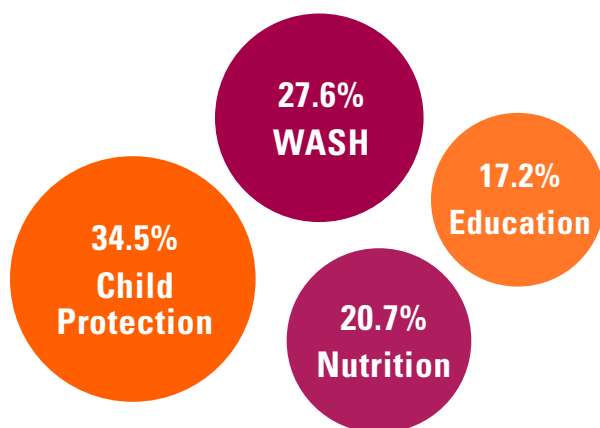
20.7%
Nutrition

17.2%
Education

Instances of positive references
to the manner in which UNICEF as CLA
integrates the centrality of protection
in cluster work

approach to AAP, for engaging with, ensuring feedback to and adjusting the response based on the views of affected people" is one of the four mandatory responsibilities of HCTs.[81] While clusters should be ensuing AAP in their strategies and responses, there are still **major gaps in the humanitarian sector, as a whole, in terms of putting AAP into practice**.[82] UNICEF has taken steps to strengthen its work on, and commitment to, AAP, for example through the 2020 revised CCCs as well as through other initiatives.[83] Some of

the clusters have also taken specific steps to move AAP forward. The GEC strategy, 2017–2019, for example, refers to AAP as part of a strategic area. The GWC strategy, 2016–2020 and the '5 WASH Minimum Commitments to Safety and Dignity for Affected People' also provide significant AAP guidance. The CP AoR has AAP as one of the key objectives in its strategy, 2017–2020. However, putting a priority on paper does not always guarantee its implementation.

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81 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Standard Terms of Reference for Humanitarian County Teams', IASC, Geneva, 2017.

82 See for example ALNAP, 'The State of the Humanitarian System', Overseas Development Institute, London, 2018; Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance, 'Humanitarian Accountability Report 2020', CHS, Geneva, 2020.

83 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action', UNICEF, New York, 2020. The evaluation team also heard of other AAP initiatives, but did not receive any documentation with further detail on them.

In various countries and clusters, the evaluation saw that the AAP priority has been taken up by the cluster, but not always with the same level of success. One informant, for example, noted that in their country, few of the cluster strategies had addressed it as a priority, while another key informant noted that the government had insisted that it was responsible for addressing the engagement with local communities, based on its own data. In another, AAP was mentioned in several interviews, but it was not clear whether AAP was a UNICEF CLA priority, an HRP priority, the agency's own way of working, or a topic promoted by the cluster coordinator. As seen from the survey (Figure 19), respondents tended to appreciate UNICEF's work as CLA, with 70 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that the way in which UNICEF works as CLA leads to positive results vis-à-vis AAP. This very positive view from the survey stands in contrast with the analysis from the interviews: among the four cross-cutting commitments examined in this section, AAP was the only commitment where informants **did not cite UNICEF as doing well as CLA** (see Figure 20).[84,85]   A cluster in a third country provided the prime example of such mixed views: some saw AAP as a priority in the work of the cluster, and others had not heard of it.

Generally, even in countries where respondents mentioned that AAP has been on the agenda of the cluster, the evaluation team **did not encounter much evidence that the promotion of AAP was a systematic priority of UNICEF as CLA.**

HD nexus

> **EQ4:** Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitment to the HD nexus?

Here again, the evaluation encountered little evidence to suggest a systematic approach by UNICEF to implementing its CLA commitments regarding the humanitarian-development (HDN). Experience among the countries varied, and while the evaluation heard examples of how the HDN has been given attention in the clusters, it was not possible to clearly attribute these results to the efforts of the CLA as such (as opposed to the efforts of the cluster as a whole).

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84   Figure 20 has been established based on the systematic coding of all key informant interview notes. It shows the cross-coding of various areas of CLA work discussed, and where interviewees signalled these areas as being ones where UNICEF as CLA does well, performs adequately but could do better, or does not do well. The bigger the dot, the larger the number of interviewees indicating the specific entry as an area where UNICEF does well or less well. Interviewees were systematically asked what, in their view, UNICEF does well and less well, but spontaneous comments in this regard have also been coded. For more information regarding the use/meaning of the specific codes used, see Annex 2d (KII Coding Table).

85   It is noteworthy that the scores on this issue were not much better for the other three cross-cutting commitments in the coding, with only very few mentions of progress/good work by UNICEF as CLA.

Recently, UNICEF undertook a major evaluation of its work on the humanitarian-development nexus.[86] As noted in that evaluation, UNICEF has "a comparative advantage in HD nexus coordination through its dual mandate, cluster lead roles, sub-national presence and strong relationships and networks with governments".[87] Being a multi-mandate organization puts UNICEF in a unique position to bring the two spheres closer together and to bridge the infamous gap. Whether it is successful in doing so internally is not the subject of this evaluation; what matters is the expertise UNICEF brings to the cluster and the extent to which that expertise is reflected in the work of the clusters it leads.

In analysing this question, the evaluation noted that **some of the agency's recent work on the nexus is reflected in the work of the clusters**. At the global level, the evaluation saw that the nexus plays a significant role in cluster conversations and plans. For example, the GNC has done considerable work on the nexus, including for example a review of opportunities and challenges for strengthening humanitarian and development linkages in nutrition, undertaken together with the Scaling Up Nutrition movement.[88]

Around 70 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UNICEF as CLA works in a way that has a positive impact with regard to the HDN (Figure 19). Results were more mixed among interviewees, with nearly equal numbers indicating that UNICEF was working well/making progress or not working well/not making progress.

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86   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming', UNICEF, New York, 2021.

87   *Ibid.*, p. 52.

88   https://www.nutritioncluster.net/resource/Review_of_opportunities_and_challenges_for_strengthening_HDN_nexus_for_Nutrition

To be sure, working on the HDN is fraught with challenges. Limited humanitarian funding and planning cycles make it difficult to plan longer-term interventions. Convening partners can be complicated where these differ between humanitarian and development spheres. Some clusters, such as education or WASH, benefit from having clear government counterparts, while child protection and nutrition are often split between various ministries, complicating efforts to achieve synergies. The relevance or feasibility of work on the nexus varies from one context to another; in some circumstances, there **might even be a tension between working on the nexus and stressing the importance of principled humanitarian action, especially in regions of armed conflict**. For example, a key informant in one of these countries noted, "here construction

is supposed to be the responsibility of the government, but in practice, it is the NGOs that are doing the water systems works and implementation. I understand the need for the government to be involved, but they want to control everything, including how we work and what we do". While cluster priorities do not always align with those of the government, particularly in situations of armed conflict, some clusters have looked at how to align cluster priorities with government priorities.

Generally, clusters will follow the guidance from the HC and HCT when there is a sudden and fundamental change of circumstances in humanitarian conditions in a country in terms of their ways of working and engagement with the government. Yet again, this approach will ultimately depend on individual leadership and the level of communication and direct interaction between the cluster coordinators and the UNICEF representative.

Overall, the evaluation found that UNICEF could be doing much more to support the nexus approach throughout the clusters for which it is CLA. As noted in the nexus evaluation, UNICEF is in a positive position to work across the nexus, but "this positioning would be enhanced if UNICEF were to invest further in the coordination and leadership capacities of its staff, and the ability of staff to work confidently across humanitarian and development programming".[89] This applies to

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89   UNICEF, Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming, p.56.

cluster coordinators as well. As with the other areas explored in this section, the evaluation team did not come across evidence to indicate an institutional strategic effort from UNICEF as CLA to prioritize the the HDN through the clusters.

Localization

> **EQ4:** Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitment to localization?

Localization has been taken very seriously by the clusters and UNICEF in several of the countries that were part of this evaluation. The role of the CP AoR/sub-cluster was particularly singled out in KIIs. In one country, the global CP AoR initiated training and capacity development of national NGOs and dedicated funding for sub-national coordination by national NGOs. In another country, the CP sub-cluster is co-led by a national NGO; the position is funded by an international NGO (INGO) and capacity-building is provided by UNICEF. (At the time of the evaluation, the UNICEF cluster coordinator position was vacant, and therefore the co-lead was managing the CP sub-cluster on its own). As a result of this approach, membership and engagement in the sub-cluster has increased dramatically; it is cited as an example by many and is now considered a model for all other sectors in the country. In other countries, however, similar situations with a local NGO representative as co-lead have been less successful. Much depends on the person

in the position, the necessary support being provided, and the state of affairs of the cluster as a whole.

In other contexts, localization is used as a strategy to extend a limited response capacity, even if thinly, and working with national NGOs is part of the strategy. In some cases, this strategy raises additional questions around the hidden costs of the localization approach for national and local NGOs, such as their higher risk exposure and the limited degree of security management services and support they often receive. As one key informant put it: "At least half of UNICEF's implementing partners are local and national NGOs, but they receive only 5 per cent of security support and services on the ground. This issue has been raised with OCHA". Similar comments were made by other key informants from national NGOs, with one saying, "UNICEF is very cautious and restrictive in terms of security. It does not have the same standards and risk-tolerance that we see for other agencies such as WFP [the World Food Programme], and it is asking us as to go to areas where they would not go".

FIGURE 19
Survey responses – AAP, localization and HD nexus

> "The way in which UNICEF carries out its CLA role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to AAP?"

SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ALL COMPLETE RESPONSES
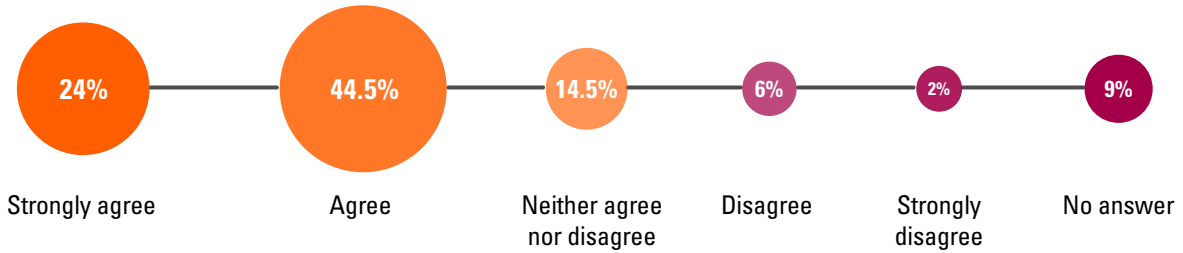
24%	44.5%	14.5%	6%	2%	9%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

> "The way in which UNICEF carries out its CLA role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to localization?"

26%	44%	13%	6.5%	2%	6.5%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer

> "The way in which UNICEF carries out its CLA role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to the HD nexus?"

24%	48%	13.5%	4%	1.5%	9%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
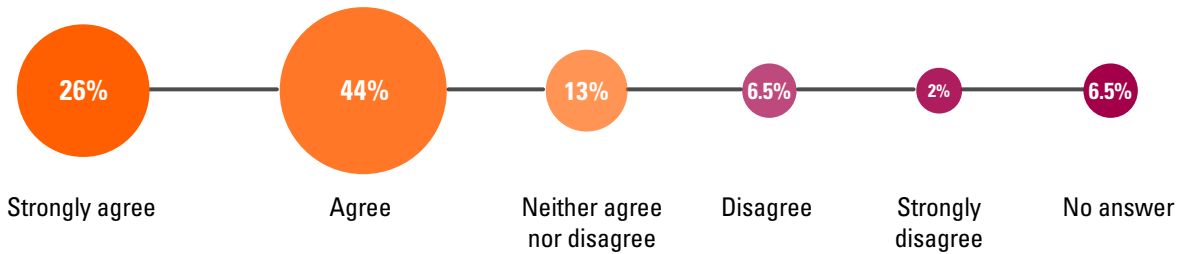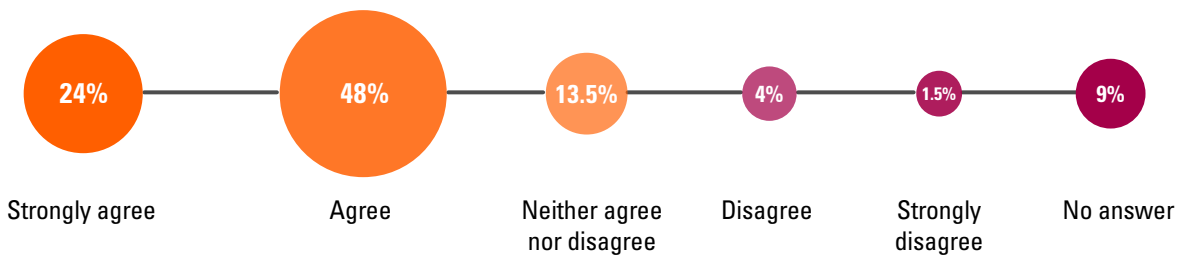
FIGURE 20
Interview analysis – What does UNICEF as CLA do well and less well

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES
GLOBAL, REGIONAL, & COUNTRY LEVELS

	UNICEF as CLA does well/ is making progress	UNICEF as CLA does OK, but more could be done	UNICEF as CLA does not do well/ encounters challenges
Core functions			
CLA role v. agency management			
CLA investment/commitment			
State/sub-national level coordination			
Advocacy			
Information management			
Resource mobilization			
Operational support or not			
Strengthening capacity			
Localization			
AAP			
HD nexus			
Centrality protection			
COVID-19			
Remaining fit-for-purpose			
Innovative approaches or not			
Working across clusters			
Predictability			
Accountability (cluster)			
Partnership			
POLR			
Global cluster support/linkages			
Gaps response			
Collective effort or not			

The larger the red dot, the more interviewees indicated this area as one in which UNICEF as CLA does well/less well.
See Annex 2d for a description of the codes used.

TABLE 5
Leadership Role of the CLA – Summary of findings

Leadership Role of the CLA: Summary of findings		
	What is UNICEF doing well	**What is UNICEF doing less well**
Leadership commitments	UNICEF has taken steps to strengthen its cluster commitments – both as a cluster member and as cluster lead agency – in the 2020 revised Core Commitments for Children, including specific references to its coordination and leadership role. Many of the cluster coordinators, whether at global or country levels, recognized and explained the criticality of leadership.	Compared to its coordination responsibilities, the CLA's leadership role is less well understood. Where alignment of individual agency and collective interests is seen, this alignment appears as mainly thanks to individual efforts.
Strategic approach	At the global level, all clusters have a strategy and strategic advisory group (SAG) in place. Key informants noted that, for a number of the SAGs, while they have been in place for several years, the roles have become clearer and more structured in recent years.	The evaluation team was struck by how little time was taken to reflect within clusters on questions such as how the cluster works best together; how to leverage the complementarity of agencies' comparative advantages; or, importantly, on how the CLA can best serve the entire cluster.
Support cluster coordinators	The GNC competency framework for cluster coordinators is an excellent example of global-level support for the leadership function; it is highly relevant in understanding and explaining leadership collective leadership.	Cluster coordinators noted that by and large, moving the cluster forward, deciding on the focus, way of working and priorities (e.g. strategy or day-to-day coordination or priority issues) is left to them and that they feel rather unsupported in their jobs. The lack of support, as they feel it, appears to come from UNICEF's level of interest in the clusters. Cluster coordinators noted that UNICEF's focus is primarily internal, instead of being concerned with the overall and collective response.
	In countries where the UNICEF representative has taken an active interest and role in relation to the clusters, there has been a positive effect in terms of cluster activity and engagement. Cluster coordinators not only feel an expectation to deliver, but also that they have been given the profile and importance to provide leadership and move things forward.	Where alternative reporting lines are in place and no transparency exists on the justification for these alternatives, it feeds the suggestion that the UNICEF representative takes little interest in the clusters, resulting in a feeling of isolation and of being undervalued on the part of cluster coordinators.
Building on UNICEF four clusters/AoR	Initiatives of inter-cluster coordination were seen, in particular at country level	More could be done to build on and take advantage of UNICEF's experience as CLA for four clusters, in the collective interest.

Leadership Role of the CLA: Summary of findings	
What is UNICEF doing well	What is UNICEF doing less well
Co-leadership	Generally, UNICEF appears to be open to co-leadership arrangements at the country level.	There is wide variation in describing shared leadership arrangements at the country level, including co-chairs/leads, chair and co-chair, co-coordinators, co-facilitators, and several other terms. Terminology depends not only how these concepts are understood by those involved and whether they reflect similar arrangements, but also how co-leadership is understood. Coordination arrangements referred to as 'co-leadership' barely fit this concept for the simple reason that they are a practical division of (coordination) tasks without much, if any, leadership vision or roles involved. In several situations, 'co-leaders' have not agreed on defining or describing their relationship on paper.
Collective leadership	There are signs of collective leadership in the clusters, especially at the global level, and intermittently at the country level. A large majority of respondents connected the collective leadership of the clusters on behalf of the CLA to the individual efforts of the cluster coordinator.	For UNICEF to strengthen its leadership responsibility, it must strengthen its institutional understanding and practice on collective leadership, including with cluster partners.
Competency framework	The 2020 GNC Competency Framework for Cluster Coordination lists a set of core behavioural competencies that largely cover working with others in mutually enhancing and beneficial ways, which are crucial in relation to collective leadership.	Further promoting the framework, together with strengthening cluster training on leadership and behavioural skills, would mark a significant step forward in what a number of key informants described as recruiting the 'right person for the job'.
Policy commitments	There is guidance from the four global clusters supporting the four policy issues looked at (the centrality of protection, AAP, HD nexus, and localization).	There is generally limited direction from UNICEF as CLA for the clusters to implement and prioritize these four policy commitments.
Leadership responsibilities	UNICEF regularly undertakes cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM), which feeds into the planning of the clusters at country level.	The CCPM could be a useful barometer of CLA accountability, but instead it now looks at a plethora of cluster activities in a box-ticking way of checking, which does not help to arrive at a clear indication of whether or not the CLA is meeting its leadership responsibilities.

Leadership Role of the CLA: Summary of findings		
	What is UNICEF doing well	What is UNICEF doing less well
Partnership	There are positive examples, both globally and at country level, of how UNICEF clusters have engaged partners, for example in strategic decision-making, in enhancing mutual trust, and cases where partnership is seen as the priority.	The degree to which UNICEF is perceived as effectively representing cluster concerns at country level varies, and is closely linked to the individual approach of the UNICEF representative.
POLR		The POLR responsibility remains inconsistently addressed by UNICEF as CLA.

4. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Before outlining the main conclusions of this evaluation, it is worth emphasising that **the CLA role requires an organizational mindset and way of working focused on what UNICEF does for, and with, the collective of agencies.** In its new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF notes that the focus will be shifted "beyond what the organization can do alone, toward using its mandate to mobilize other actors to maximize collective impact". This evaluation reaffirms the importance of this step, but also shows that UNICEF still has some way to go toward institutionalizing it. While parts of the agency, especially cluster coordinators, have adopted it, many systems and processes are still structured in terms of 'UNICEF first'.

The CLA role also **requires an approach that not only follows existing inter-agency guidance, but also actively initiates and contributes to ongoing strategic discussions within the IASC about the extent to which the cluster approach is still 'fit-for-purpose' and what modifications might be needed to improve performance**. The IASC transformative agenda (2012) stated that the "clusters will be stripped back to become lean, effective and efficient coordination mechanisms focusing on delivery of results, rather than process". Nearly ten years later, it looks as if the clusters have gone some way in this direction, but they are far from "lean and streamlined". Process still dominates

the work of the clusters, and as the United Nations agency with the most cluster lead responsibilities, UNICEF should have signalled this.

More specifically, the evaluation found that:

1. UNICEF has generally delivered on the coordination responsibilities of its CLA role.

- Using the benchmarks of existing cluster approach policy, UNICEF has generally fulfilled its CLA role in terms of coordination. UNICEF has to some extent worked to ensure that cluster coordinators are in place globally and, with some exceptions, at country level. However, these positions are not always staffed in a timely and consistent manner. Global clusters are often called upon to fill staff gaps. UNICEF has not made a concerted effort to ensure coordination and IM staff are readily available and supported in their career paths.

- UNICEF has generally worked to ensure that the clusters have dedicated capacity and tools for information management; the clusters collectively produce and circulate policies and other guidance materials; the help desks and similar functions provide technical support to cluster participants; and the clusters provide the venue for inter-agency sectoral consultations and partnerships.

- The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a 'stress test' for the clusters, which they have passed, thanks to adjustments in the ways of working, the specific guidance materials produced and the resources mobilized.

- Driven by process, inter-agency demands, and sometimes UNICEF programmatic demands, the clusters have taken on more responsibilities and tasks than initially foreseen. In addition to creating a number of challenges, this expansion has also resulted in a rather mechanical way of working in which processes and tools (templates, dashboards, HPC cycle, etc.) dominate cluster work.

2. The CLA role is not adequately valued or prioritized across the organization, particularly at the level of senior management, and CLA responsibilities are not sufficiently shared across UNICEF entities. CC positions are not sufficiently incentivized within UNICEF.

- There are at least six different UNICEF entities that have a responsibility in fulfilling the CLA role. In practice, however, much of the CLA burden falls only on two of these entities: cluster coordinators at global and country levels and the GCCU. In other words, CLA responsibilities are left to the working level, with insufficient support from across the organization, resulting in inconsistency and unevenness in how the role is fulfilled, particularly at the country level.

- The evidence encountered by the evaluation team would seem to suggest that reasons for this include the mindsets, culture and systems of UNICEF. UNICEF's incentives and appraisal systems reward staff for their achievements for the agency, instead of for the collective through clusters. While many UNICEF cluster coordinators have done a remarkable job, they often feel isolated in their roles. Clusters provide a unique 'selling' opportunity for UNICEF, which is too often overlooked or neglected by senior leadership or the broader organization. It would appear that UNICEF has not yet recognized that its work for children in humanitarian settings is more effective when carried out on behalf of, and together with, the collective of agencies.

3. **UNICEF has not equally performed on the leadership responsibilities of its CLA role. Many co-leadership arrangements are not yet delivering on thier potential.**

- The leadership role of the CLA should include:

    1) Building a consensus among cluster partners around a shared vision and ways to collectively realize that vision;

    2) Bringing the clusters and AoR closer together by working toward inter-sectoral connections and synergies; and

    3) Sharing UNICEF's experiences and views on the cluster approach in HCTs, the IASC and with the wider humanitarian community.

- While there are several positive signs, UNICEF has generally underperformed in providing leadership across these three areas.

- A particular gap is in setting vision and strategy, a key leadership function. Day-to-day coordination duties, many of which are dictated by inter-agency processes and have expanded since the cluster approach began, dominate the workload, often at the expense of formulating meaningful strategies. Leadership also extends to deciding on the importance or relevance of certain tasks, and UNICEF and its cluster coordinators should not hesitate to prioritize in this way.

- Positive examples of leadership were encountered. One such example was the creation by the GNC, under UNICEF leadership, of the cluster coordination competency framework, which was subsequently disseminated by the GCCU. The GWC was also singled out in interviews as promoting a welcome approach to collective leadership.

- The co-leadership arrangements of the GEC and of several country-based clusters are not yet delivering on their potential for collective leadership and meaningful partnership. Too often, co-leadership arrangements become practical divisions of labour, which do not capitalize on the complementary strengths of the co-leaders, resulting in missed opportunities. A wide variety of terms are used to describe co-

leadership arrangements, which creates confusion in terms of respective roles and responsibilities of the co-leads, especially when these arrangements are not put on paper.

4. The underlying tenets of the cluster approach – accountability, predictability and partnership – are inconsistently understood and applied.

- The principle of accountability, in particular, is fraught with issues, best illustrated in the provider of last resort concept, which is understood and applied in many different ways within UNICEF. In some situations, it has been applied as the provider of 'first resort', with UNICEF taking on a large proportion of the delivery in a certain sector, while in others it has not been applied or its activation is entirely opaque. Without the relevant bodies – such as the HCT or IASC – asking for transparency and explanations, accountability remains elusive.

- Predictability in the cluster approach has two aspects:

    1) In the CLA's use of similar tools and processes in the clusters everywhere, which was generally found to be the case; and

    2) Through the continued staffing of (dedicated) cluster coordinators and information managers. Gaps remain in this second aspect, sometimes for prolonged periods of time. UNICEF's standby partners may fill these gaps

on a short-term basis, but this is not a sustainable solution.

- Partnership is an area where UNICEF as CLA is perceived by partners to be doing quite well, but the organization has no systematic approach to partnership. Implementation of IASC guidance in this regard is inconsistent.

    1) The clusters were commended for their inclusiveness in terms of ensuring partnerships with local, national and international organizations. Cluster coordinators are seen as promoting and strengthening partnerships. As a result of the policy on localization and a commitment to strengthening partnerships, the number of national and local NGOs participating in the clusters has increased in many countries, especially in education and the CP AoR. However, this partnership approach is often due to the individual efforts of cluster coordinators.

    2) UNICEF is perceived as not understanding the power dynamics that arise from a 'donor' relationship when NGOs implement programmes with UNICEF funds. This has an impact in terms of how freely NGOs can engage in the cluster out of fear of funding-related repercussions.

- The commitment by UNICEF to undertake an evaluation of its CLA responsibilities shows UNICEF's commitment to learning and improving in relation to its CLA role and is one of the first steps toward CLA

accountability. What it does with the findings and recommendations will also reflect how well it is fulfilling its cluster lead agency responsibilities.

- By undertaking this evaluation, UNICEF is fulfilling an element of accountability. Few, if any, comparable recent efforts have been seen from other United Nations agencies holding cluster lead agency responsibilities, or from OCHA as chair of the IASC.

- Partly due to this lack of wider review and scrutiny, inter-agency cluster approach policy documents have become outdated or out-of-sync with current practices, at least for certain crucial aspects of the cluster approach.

- Evaluations such as this one contribute to institutional and inter-agency learning about the continued relevance and effectiveness of the cluster approach. A comparable evaluation at the global level could be helpful for the broader humanitarian community to understand the current state of the cluster approach and related opportunities and limitations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation generated three overarching recommendations and 12 sub-recommendations to address the underlying issues and challenges identified in the report. Since some of the findings of the CLARE II evaluation point to long-standing issues (raised over seven years ago by the CLARE I evaluation), the following recommendations also represent a second opportunity for UNICEF to tackle some of the outstanding obstacles that have hampered performance of the CLA role to the fullest:

1. **UNICEF should embrace, promote and operationalize the understanding that its work for children in humanitarian settings is even more effective when carried out on behalf of, and together with, the collective of actors. A change in approach is required for the organization to focus beyond what UNICEF can do alone, fostering a renewed recognition of the CLA role not as a mere 'add-on' but as a core imperative of UNICEF's mandate and an international commitment.**

a) To further institutionalize the CLA role, UNICEF should ensure that key CLA functions, including cluster leadership positions (CCs and IMOs), are covered from the **agency's core budget**. *[based on section 3.2]*

b) UNICEF should also **clarify how it prioritizes its CLA role and responsibilities** amidst the myriad other priorities it has set, while further supporting the notion of '**inter-sectorality**' of the humanitarian response. The GCCU should continue to build on the role it has established over the years with a view to further promoting both UNICEF's CLA role and the notion of '**inter-sectorality**' of the humanitarian response. *[based on section 3.2/Cluster coordinators; global cluster coordination unit]*

c) UNICEF should **provide full transparency** to cluster partners about its efforts and intentions around **fundraising and funding for the clusters** when it has the **dual role** of being the CLA as well as providing financial resources as UNICEF to cluster partners, to avoid (or better manage) **perceived conflicts of interest**. Further, perceptions of uneven power dynamics should be addressed by reducing/limiting the frequency of **double-hatted CC positions** as well as clarifying and managing expectations of UNICEF programme specialists (on the CC's role in clusters) accordingly. *[based on section 2.2/ Funding, partnerships and collective response]*

d) UNICEF should promote **strategic advisory groups (SAGs)** as platforms of collective leadership where issues such as **cluster vision and objectives** are openly discussed, defined and prioritized by cluster partners. The GCCU should regularly promote and disseminate the good practices that exist in relation to the effective functioning of SAGs. *[based on section 3.3]*

e) UNICEF should **provide clear direction** on how the clusters it leads should implement and prioritize the **four policy commitments** (centrality of protection, AAP, HD nexus and localization) in addition to other institutional commitments such as those relating to disabilities and gender-based violence. UNICEF should ensure systematic dissemination of relevant guidance to all staff. *[based on section 3.6]*

> **Responsible Office(s): EMOPS/GCCU; PG; DAPM, COs (including through RO and EMOPS support)**

2. In prioritizing its role for the collective of humanitarian actors, UNICEF should align internal systems with its CLA responsibilities, ensuring that these systems sufficiently recognize the central importance of the CLA role, and reflect the agency-wide accountability for the fulfilment of these responsibilities.

a) In reviewing the **accountability framework for humanitarian coordination, including information management**, UNICEF should ensure CLA accountability is systematically addressed as mandated by the CCCs, starting with a **compact** between UNICEF senior management, ROs and COs that has **clear accountabilities** for humanitarian coordination, and **established metrics** for

performance management for CLA staff at all levels (as part of key performance indicators and performance management systems). *[based on sections 3.2 and 3.5]*

i. Ensuring that the CLA responsibilities are part of line management and supervisory responsibilities, **UNICEF country representatives must be held accountable** by their supervisors (regional directors) for ensuring the key CLA positions are created and filled; supporting and supervising cluster coordinators; empowering them to provide leadership; and bringing cluster priorities to the HCT and other relevant inter-agency forums. Likewise, **regional directors should also report** on how they have worked with representatives in humanitarian countries and supported them to fulfil the CLA role.

ii. UNICEF should mainstream CLA responsibilities in **annual work plans and budgets, country programme documents** (and other relevant documents related to developing a new country programme) and **programme strategy notes, and CO performance management using the key performance indicators, monitoring and audit frameworks, job descriptions**, etc.

iii. UNICEF should also further invest systematically in **global-level analyses** of cluster performance (e.g. CCPM results).

b) UNICEF human resource systems must better support the CLA role to ensure

that the right capacities are 'in the right place at the right time'. *[based on section 2.1 and 2.2/ Staffing of cluster leadership; and 3.6]*

i. In recognizing that the cluster coordinator is a key leadership position, UNICEF should ensure that a proper career path is established for the coordination function, to attract and retain talent. Conversely, those in (other) leadership positions such as programme section chiefs should fulfil a cluster coordination position as part of their career trajectories.

ii. UNICEF should **prioritize the calibre of staff** in cluster coordination positions, rather than over-relying on stand-by partners for **filling cluster (leadership) positions**. To support this, UNICEF should ensure that staff with CLA responsibilities are **prioritized in humanitarian learning and knowledge management trainings** to ensure they have adequate knowledge, skills and capacities to address the challenges that UNICEF experiences in CLA responsibilities and to support the creation of viable career pathways in coordination within UNICEF.

iii. UNICEF should prioritize emergency recruitment, establishing an **internal talent pool/deployment roster** of properly trained professionals in cluster coordination, available to be rapidly deployed on surge to fill gaps.

iv. To help make a significant step forward in effective recruitment of CC and IM positions, UNICEF should also further promote the **GNC, GEC, GCP AoR and**

GWC competency frameworks for cluster coordination and information management.

v. UNICEF should prioritize investment and support to **building national capacities for leadership and coordination in humanitarian situations**, as relevant.

vi. UNICEF should strengthen its **capacities to more systematically track and monitor** resources (HR/staffing and funding) provided to cluster coordination work.

Responsible Office(s): EMOPS/GCCU; PD; DHR, DAPM, ROs, COs (including through RO and EMOPS support)

3. **To strengthen accountability and learning, UNICEF should use the knowledge and experience it has gained as CLA, and from evaluations such as this one, to push for a reflection** on how clusters can be adapted to the changing context in which humanitarian response takes place, **and lead changes in the IASC to clarify the underlying tenets of the cluster approach.**

a) UNICEF should **advocate for cluster guidance to be updated** and cluster coordination processes to be **streamlined**, and where possible rationalized, as part of an IASC reflection on the clusters and

their future. This **recalibration**, which is critical to better serve affected populations, includes ensuring a balance between coordination activities and leadership, while moving away from time-consuming processes which have ultimately detracted from leading the cluster strategically and realizing collective leadership. UNICEF should play a leadership role in any updating efforts undertaken by the IASC, given its (co-)CLA experience. *[based on section 2.2]*

b) To ensure that clusters can adequately respond to the growth and complexity of humanitarian needs, UNICEF should continue to systematically advocate within the IASC for **multi-year planning/funding for HNO/HRPs**, strengthening **monitoring of needs** and programme interventions, including of both coverage and **quality**; and addressing issues of **deactivation and transition of clusters** (e.g. developing guidelines and/or note on transition). *[based on section 2.2]*

c) The Executive Director of UNICEF should **report at least once a year** on the way UNICEF is delivering on its CLA responsibilities, including accountability for senior leaders for supporting the clusters, at the IASC Principals meeting and to the UNICEF Executive Board. When relevant, the Executive Director/Deputy Executive Director/Director of Emergency Programmes should also **propose adjustments or new ideas** related to the CLA role based on UNICEF's experiences. Through this engagement, UNICEF will also be setting an example, which principals of

other agencies that hold CLA roles might follow. *[based on section 3.2]*

d) UNICEF should **advocate for the clarification of co-leadership** by the IASC, with a view to achieving a stronger definition of the function and its implications, especially in terms of accountabilities (e.g. staffing/PoLR). *[based on section 3.4]*

e) UNICEF should advocate for the IASC to review the concept of **provider of last resort** with a view to making it more transparent and ensuring it is more consistently applied (or rejected); currently, it obscures accountability more than it strengthens the concept. *[based on section 3.5]*

Responsible Office(s): EMOPS; Executive Office; PPD

Analytical dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
1. Is UNICEF fulfilling its CLA responsibilities in line with the principles/standards/roles of the cluster approach (ToR Q1 adjusted)			
Relevance and Appropriateness **Internal CLA management processes/resources** *The principles are predictability; accountability; and partnership.*	1a. Has UNICEF as CLA worked to fulfil the CLA responsibilities? 1b. What investments has UNICEF made in order to fulfil its CLA role in line with the principles/roles of the cluster approach?? 1c. Do UNICEF management arrangements within and beyond EMOPS provide a supportive and enabling environment for CLA? 1d. What efforts have been made for UNICEF cluster coordinators to address new issues and challenges?	#1 Evidence of efforts to operationalize the principles into cluster strategy, policy guidance and tools. #2 Proportion of cluster/AoR policies, procedures, tools and guidance that clearly reflect and operationalize all IASC cluster standards and policies. #3 Evidence of investments made to support cluster leadership, leadership approaches, and leadership development of cluster coordinators. #4 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF's management arrangements within and beyond EMOPS provide a supportive and enabling environment for CLA.	KII document review/ survey[90]

90 "Survey" refers to the online surveys that will be used with cluster partners/stakeholders, as well as cluster/AoR (co-)leads.

Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
		#5 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF is meeting its CLA responsibilities.	
		#6 Degree of demonstrated awareness and understanding of UNICEF CLA commitments, responsibilities, and implications thereof, of UNICEF staff.	
2. Is UNICEF's CLA role aligned with the coordination and response needs of country level clusters and/or other relevant coordination bodies (ToR Q2 adjusted)			
Internal CLA management processes/resources *At the global level, clusters exist to strengthen system-wide capacity. This includes operational support.*	2a. Does UNICEF as CLA and cluster partners have the same understanding of needs and expectations (at the global and country levels)? What efforts has CLA leadership made to ensure the same under-standing of needs and expectations? 2b. Is UNICEF as CLA making efforts in terms of collective learning and innovation and supporting country-based clusters in these efforts as well?	#7 Understanding of needs and expectations of global and country-based cluster partners. #8 Evidence and type of support provided to country-based clusters. #9 Degree of sentiment among partners that cluster/AoR staff and UNICEF as an organization understands and addresses their coordination needs.	KII/ document review/ survey
3. How does UNICEF conceive of its leadership role?			
Internal CLA management processes/resources *Leadership is particularly reflected in developing the mission and strategy and working on agreement on the goals and priorities of the cluster.*	3a. What is UNICEF as CLA doing to fulfil the mission, goals, and strategy of the cluster?	#10 Evidence of efforts to fulfil the mission, goals, and strategy of the cluster. #11 Understanding among UNICEF staff of the leadership role. #12 Level of variety in perceptions of leadership.	KII/document review

Relevance and Appropriateness

Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
4. Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitments to localization; AAP; the HD nexus; centrality of protection? (ToR Q3 and 10 adjusted)			
Cross-cutting factors *These key commitments call for a specific leadership effort. They are closely inter-connected.*	4a. What efforts have been made by UNICEF as CLA in fulfilling these commitments? 4b. Has UNICEF in its CLA role had a coherent approach to interconnecting these commitments? 4c. What efforts can be made as CLA in terms of next steps in fulfilling these commitments? 4d. What can be done in working toward a coherent approach to the three commitments?	#13 Evidence of efforts made to operationalize commitments. #14 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that the way in which UNICEF is meeting its CLA responsibilities is leading to positive results vis-à-vis commitments. #15 Degree of understanding among UNICEF staff of the connections between the three commitments. #16 Evidence of efforts to ensure a coherent approach toward the three commitments.	KII/ document review/ survey
5. Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to collectively understand and develop cluster responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in line with humanitarian standards and principles?			
Crisis-specific contextual elements/COVID-19 *As the scale and magnitude of the pandemic are unprecedented in recent history (last three decades), the cluster is the mechanism by definition to develop and mobilize collective technical capacity to respond.*	5a. What efforts have been made by UNICEF as CLA for the cluster to respond to COVID-19 and to prepare for further impact? 5b. What actions has UNICEF taken to ensure humanitarian standards are used in the COVID-19 response (including Sphere, INEE and CPMS)? 5c. What efforts can be made as CLA in further addressing COVID-19 and/or other future public health crises/crises where lessons from COVID-19 can apply? Efforts made to understand the impact of COVID-19 beyond 2020?	#17 Evidence and type of efforts made to respond to COVID-19. #18 Evidence of efforts made to understand the impact of COVID-19. #19 Evidence that UNICEF as CLA has pushed for COVID-19 response plans in line with relevant humanitarian standards and principles. #20 Degree of sentiment among country level clusters of relevant support and guidance received under COVID-19.	KII/document review/survey

Relevance and Appropriateness

	Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
Relevance and Appropriateness	**6. Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?**			
	Balancing of institution vs. cluster priorities *While accountability for cluster leadership rests with the CLA, this evaluation also sees leadership as a collective effort. SAGs are supposed to be chaired by the cluster coordinator.*	6a. Is UNICEF as CLA engaging with the cluster's SAG? 6b. What efforts has UNICEF undertaken to equip its cluster coordinators with relevant skills to ensure a participatory approach? 6.c What is the impact of collective leadership on accountability? 6d. What steps need to be undertaken to support a collective notion of leadership?	#21 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF understands and approaches leadership as a collective endeavour. #22 Evidence of efforts on behalf of UNICEF to equip coordinators with relevant skills. #23 Degree of sentiment among cluster partners that they are appropriately included, informed and consulted on the strategic planning of the cluster.	KII/ document review/ survey
	7. Is UNICEF as CLA promoting innovative approaches and initiatives?			
	The Grand Bargain *The Grand Bargain commits signatories to innovation, especially in light of reducing costs and increasing efficiency.*	6a. Has UNICEF as CLA pushed for innovative approaches, from the perspective of cluster participants and stakeholders? 6b. Where and how can UNICEF as CLA push better for innovative approaches?	#24 Evidence of innovative approaches taken by country level cluster as well as global. #25 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF as CLA promotes innovation.	KII/document review/survey
	8. Has UNICEF as CLA taken steps to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit-for-purpose in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space)?			
	Crisis-specific contextual elements/COVID-19 *The question on the future of the clusters in light of changing humanitarian space has popped up at various moments, including at the WHS. COVID-19 may also provoke a further reflection, especially as some of the clusters work globally, i.e. beyond clusterized responses or HRP-countries.*	8a. Does UNICEF as CLA make efforts to ensure that the cluster's mission and goals remain relevant? What steps have been taken to this effect? 8b. What steps can be taken by UNICEF as CLA to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit-for-purpose in light of the changing environment (including humanitarian space)?	#26 Evidence of efforts made to ensure the cluster's mission and goals remain relevant. #27 Degree of sentiment among internal stakeholders that UNICEF as CLA works to ensure the cluster's mission and goals remain relevant.	KII/survey/ FGD with reference group

Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
9. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in emergency response? (ToR Q 4.)			
Internal CLA management processes/resources *Predictability is an underpinning principle of the cluster approach but the implications of this commitment may be understood differently as clusters appear to work in different ways.*	9a. What efforts is UNICEF as CLA making to ensure predictability in the cluster approach? 9b. What are the implications of the variation in the clusters' way of working with regard to predict-ability, and what role is UNICEF as CLA playing in this regard? 9c. Is the variation in the clusters' way of working an issue or not in ensuring predictability? And if it is an issue, can it be addressed, and if so, how?	#28. Degree of consistency in ways of working, e.g. variation in approach and support provided. #29 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF has contributed to greater predictability #30 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF has contributed to ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear and to a clear prioritization.	KII/ document review/ survey
10. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater accountability in emergency response?			
Internal CLA management processes/resources *Accountability is an underpinning principle of the cluster approach and CLAs are expected to report to the ERC.*	10a. What efforts is UNICEF as CLA making to ensure accountability in the cluster approach? 10b. Does UNICEF as CLA facilitate cluster accountability exercises such as peer review, self-reporting or evaluation? And to what degree are the outcomes shared with the IASC and/or the ERC, or other mechanisms? 10c. What initiatives or efforts can be developed to strengthen accountability within the clusters/of the CLA?	#31 Evidence of efforts to facilitate accountability exercises. #32 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF has contributed to greater accountability	KII/document review/survey
11. Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to strengthened partnership in emergency response?			
Relationship with (cluster) partners *Partnership is an underpinning principle of the cluster approach but perceptions may differ on the leadership's efforts to follow a partnership approach.*	11a. What perceptions do UNICEF partners have of the CLA role? 11b. To what extent has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to empower cluster partners and develop a collective orientation in accordance with the Principles of Partnership?	#33 Evidence of efforts to empower cluster partners and develop a collective orientation. #34 Degree of demonstrated awareness, understanding and perceived application of the Principles of Partnership of UNICEF CLA staff.	KII/document review/survey

Effectiveness

	Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
Coherence/connectedness		11c. To what extent is UNICEF as CLA making efforts in empowering diverse local actors as cluster partners? 11d. What initiatives or efforts could/should be developed to strengthen partnerships within the clusters/of the CLA?	#35 Evidence of efforts to empower diverse local actors as cluster partners both in terms of global level guidance for country-based clusters and at country level.	
	12. Has UNICEF led on advocacy efforts in line with its CLA responsibilities?			
	Internal CLA management processes/resources *Advocacy is one of the clusters' main tasks as part of operational support and particularly requires leadership. Advocacy can be undertaken to raise attention to a crisis and mobilize resources or to remind the duty-bearers of their obligations and to create (more) humanitarian space.*	12a. What advocacy initiatives have been taken by UNICEF as CLA in terms of addressing/influencing policy issues and has their impact been monitored and assessed? (ToR Q footnote 36 - adjusted) 12b. What other advocacy initiatives can or should be undertaken?	#36 Evidence and type of advocacy initiatives. #37 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that advocacy undertaken at the instigation of UNICEF as CLA has had an impact	FGD with reference group
	13. When/where has the POLR concept been invoked and what happened? (ToR Q 6 adjusted)			
	Internal CLA management processes/resources *Linked to the 2013 CLARE finding that "cluster staff and partners have a widely differing understanding of what the 'provider of last resort' concept entails", this evaluation will examine when and where it has been invoked.*	13a. When/where and with what result has the POLR concept been invoked by UNICEF as CLA? (ToR Q6 adjusted) 13b. How can UNICEF as CLA best ensure that it fulfils its POLR role when identified gaps have not been addressed? (ToR Q6 adjusted)	#38 Evidence of POLR being invoked	KII/document review

Analytical Dimensions/*Rationale*	Sub-questions (summative/formative)	Measure/indicator	Data collection method
Relevance and Appropriateness			
14. What leadership role is UNICEF as CLA playing on the issue of funding for the global clusters? (ToR Q7 adjusted)			
Internal CLA management processes/resources *Resource mobilization is a task of the clusters and the CLA clearly has a leading role in this.*	14a. What has UNICEF as CLA done in leading on the issue of funding for the global and country level clusters? (ToR Q7) 14b. Is there a need for changing the work as CLA in resource mobilization and if so in what way?	#39 Evidence of efforts made by the CLA in resource mobilization at the global level.	KII/ document review/ survey
15. Has UNICEF as CLA encouraged linkages with other clusters, other relevant initiatives, and other partners? (ToR Q 8 adjusted)			
IASC/other clusters *The clusters are often connected to a wider network and need to engage with what is happening outside the cluster in terms of standard-setting, policy guidance, etc.*	15a. What has UNICEF done as CLA in supporting connections with initiatives and networks that are outside the global clusters? 15b. What can UNICEF do further to support connections with initiatives and networks that are outside the cluster?	#40 Type of engagement with outside initiatives and the degree to which these efforts are seen as complementary or as benefit to the work of the global cluster. #41 Degree of sentiment among stakeholders that UNICEF as CLA has engaged with other clusters to engage coherent approaches.	KII/document review/survey
16. What efforts have been made by the CLA to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?			
Internal CLA management processes/resources	16a. How has UNICEF in its CLA role endeavoured to maintain quality and coverage (geographic and programmatic) of humanitarian needs 16b. What could UNICEF as CLA do to better to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?	#42 Evidence of efforts to strengthen quality and identify gaps in response	KII/document review/survey

ANNEX 2 — METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation of UNICEF's Role as Cluster Lead (Co-)Lead Agency (CLARE II) made use of a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from global, regional and country levels.

In the inception phase, a list of ten criteria for consideration in the country selection was prepared to guide the country selection by the management group with advice from the reference group. These criteria were:

1. Regional: A regional balance should be ensured while ensuring that the chosen countries are not overburdened with other evaluations/reviews;

2. Temporal: Given the evaluation is spanning 2013-2020, it will need to consider countries with UNICEF-led clusters that cover all those years;

3. Type of response (IDP responses (i.e. cluster responses); Mixed refugee/IDP responses; Refugee responses where UNICEF clusters/AoR provided responses/support;

4. Length of crisis/response (Sudden onset; Slow onset; Protracted crisis):

5. Severity of response (L3 (using UNICEF categorization and/or IASC L3 ('Scale Up'); Other levels of response (using UNICEF criteria));

6.Cluster phase/engagement (Early activation (starting to one year); Clusters running for a year or more; Clusters phasing out or transitioning to development approaches);

7. Funding/Attention for the Crisis/ Clusters (High-profile/high-funding; Medium-level funding; Low-level funding);

8. Host government relationship (Does not object to "clusters"; Resistant to clusters; prefers sectors; Government-led sectoral/cluster response);

9. Country level cluster coordination (Clusters/AoR at national level only and supported by (dedicated) coordinators; Clusters/AoR at sub-national level and supported by (dedicated) coordinators;

Clusters/AoR at national and/or sub-national level co-led/co-facilitated by NGOs; UNICEF representative supportive of cluster leadership roles);

10. UN integrated mission setting (UN peace operation is present and mission is activated with a DSRSG/RC/HC (yes/no); UN peace operation is present and integrated mission is activated with an Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) (yes/no); UN peace operation is present and integrated mission is activated with a mandate to enable humanitarian assistance (yes/no)).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team used virtual data-collection tools to collect primary data.[91] They included remote semi-structured interviews with key informants as a the principal source of information; an online survey among UNICEF's cluster partners and cluster coordinators as a method to gather top-level perceptions among a wider group of stakeholders; and a focus group (FGDs) discussion with members of the evaluation reference group to validate specific findings.

The body of primary data collected through these methods was triangulated by the findings from a systematic document review and subsequent analysis.

Key informant interviews

The guidance for the semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) was developed following the lines of inquiry in the evaluation matrix (Annex 1), and can be found in Annex 2a below. Given the nature of the evaluation, and the need for nuanced, qualitative inputs, the interviews did not follow a systematic questionnaire approach, but KIIs were shaped as dynamic conversations in which the interviewees were asked to dig deeper into certain issues related to their specific roles and responsibilities.

The key informants were identified in two stages, as decided in consultation with the management group. As a first step, the Evaluation Office shared a list of global level contacts with the evaluation team. This list had been compiled with input from the four global clusters/sub-cluster, and included informants from amongst the following:

- Education, nutrition, and WASH clusters and child protection AoR:
  o Global (co-)coordinators/deputy coordinators
  o Selected SAG members
  o Selected diverse cluster participants at the global level
  o Selected technical working group chairs

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91 The option to recruit national consultants for country level data collection was not pursued due to delays in the identification of specific countries for study.

- UNICEF cluster coordination unit

- UNICEF EMOPS leadership and teams in New York and Geneva

- UNICEF Programme Division

- UNICEF regional directors and regional emergency advisors

- Global cluster coordination unit

- Other global cluster coordinators and relevant persons from other agencies, including the IASC secretariat and donors.

In a second step, and once the specific country contexts for study had been identified, the evaluation team liaised with cluster coordinators and/or deputy coordinators in the countries in question to identify further country-level specific informants. The list of such informants was completed during the country-level data-collection phase, essentially following a method of 'snow-balling'.[92]   For each country under specific study, the evaluation team aimed to speak to:

- Coordinators/deputy coordinators of UNICEF-led clusters/sub-clusters

- Selected diverse cluster/sub-cluster partners:
  o SAG members
  o National/local NGOs representatives
  o International NGO representatives
  o Donors
  o Government representatives

- UNICEF country office representatives

As detailed in the CLARE II inception report, the data-collection process was explained to all informants prior to their involvement, and verbal consent to take part in the interviews was consistently sought and recorded by the evaluation team.

While remote data collection had the benefit of allowing for the global, regional and country-specific contexts to be approach in parallel, it did have drawbacks in the sense of timing. A lack of responsiveness on behalf of approached interviewees, requiring numerous reminders and repeated rescheduling, meant that the data-collection phase was drawn out over several months to ensure an adequate and representative number of interviews for a quality analysis.

In the end, of the 472 interviewees identified and approached, **the evaluation team held interviews with 314 people, of which 88 were at the global and regional level and 226 at country level, in Burkina Faso, DRC, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sudan.**

The number of key informants per country, organization and cluster can be seen in the table below.

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92   A method whereby each informant suggests/gives insight into further relevant informants.

TABLE ANNEX 2.1
Number of people interviewed, per context and category

	Total	Inter	CP AoR	Educa-tion	Nutri-tion	WASH	UNICEF	INGO	NNGO	Donor	Gvt	Other[93]
Global	82	13	13	25	15	16	23	28	4	6	1	20
Regional	6	5	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Burkina Faso	15	2	2	5	2	4	5	6	1	2	0	1
DRC	18	0	5	6	6	1	5	6	2	1	1	3
Ethiopia	32	4	5	9	8	6	8	15	3	3	0	3
Mali	28	1	9	6	6	6	7	9	8	1	2	1
Mozambique	39	3	8	10	8	10	11	9	11	2	0	6
Nigeria	35	3	8	9	7	8	6	10	10	3	3	3
South Sudan	23	4	9	9	0	1	5	9	4	0	0	5
Sudan	36	10	3	9	6	8	7	12	5	4	1	7
Total	314	45	62	89	58	60	83	104	48	22	8	49

Online survey

To gather top-level perceptions from cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) coordinators/leads and partners, and with regional and global-level stakeholders, an online survey was developed and concurrently rolled out across 29 countries, i.e. all countries with a humanitarian response plan (HRP) in place early 2021, as well as Bangladesh and Honduras.

The survey, which can be found in Annex 2b, was developed based on the lines of inquiry identified in the inception report, and

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93   Including other UN agencies, academia, independent consultants.

with input from the reference group, and was made available online in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Cluster coordinators in the 29 contexts received the survey from the UNICEF Evaluation Office, and were tasked with disseminating it with their stakeholders/partners who are involved in UNICEF (co)-led cluster work.

Survey respondents were anonymous and identified only by organization, level and gender to encourage frank and honest responses. Online survey responses were not associated for the purposes of recognition with any e-mail, IP address or mobile phone number.

The dissemination strategy did not identify a specific number of targeted participants, but the aim was simply to gather as many responses as possible from various contexts. Reminders were sent to coordinators in countries where the response rate was lower, in an effort to achieve an even level of response from the various contexts. Generally speaking, the survey saw a relatively good response rate, with some variation between countries. In total, 802 respondents began completing the survey, and 428 of these completed it to the end and submitted it for analysis. On average, this is approximately 15 submitted responses per country context, but importantly, certain contexts had a significantly higher response rates than others; for example, South Sudan

saw 85 submitted responses and DRC 58, while others saw only one or two. Notably, response rates were higher in countries which were also used for specific study with KIIs, which can be linked to the fact that the evaluation team was in direct contact with stakeholders in these contexts and could thus draw further attention to the survey.

Among the 428 submitted replies, 329 came from stakeholders working at the national level. Respondents were evenly distributed among staff of international and national NGOs, at 155 and 166 respondents, respectively, with another 85 responses from United Nations agency staff, 11 from government representatives, and four from donors.[94] Close to 33 per cent of survey respondents were cluster leads/coordinators/IMOs, with the other two thirds identifying as cluster partners.

With regard to the clusters/sub-clusters, 54.4 per cent of respondents were involved with the education cluster, 36.5 per cent with the CP area of responsibility, 33.8 per cent with WASH and 24.5 per cent with nutrition. The more significant participation of education stakeholders could possibly be linked to the fact that CLARE II was carried out in parallel with a review of the GEC co-leadership arrangement, with certain questions of the survey being devised for this review in particular.

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94   The remaining 7 did not give a reply to this question.

TABLE ANNEX 2.2
Breakdown of online survey respondents

	Cluster/Sub-cluster involvement[95]					Type of cluster involvement[96]		Type of staff		Type of organization						Level of familiarity with cluster system		
	Total	CP AoR	Educa-tion	Nutri-tion	WASH	Cluster Lead/ Coord/ IMO	Cluster Part.	Intl. staff	Nat. staff	INGO	NNGO	UN Agency	Donor	Gvt.	Other	High	A little	None at all
Global	13	2	9	4	2	6	4	10	3	10	0	2	0	0	1	11	2	0
Regional	20	7	16	5	5	6	12	5	15	6	9	4	0	0	1	16	4	0
Afghanistan	30	7	17	3	13	8	18	13	17	16	7	5	0	1	1	26	3	0
Burkina Faso	10	2	7	0	1	4	5	3	7	3	1	2	1	3	0	7	2	0
DRC	58	26	37	24	16	13	36	8	48	12	36	8	0	2	0	44	11	1
Ethiopia	15	5	6	3	3	6	8	3	12	7	2	6	0	0	0	11	4	0
Mali	21	8	11	8	6	7	14	7	14	11	5	4	0	1	0	19	2	0
Mozambique	11	1	6	6	2	3	5	6	4	4	0	5	0	0	0	9	2	0
Nigeria	39	23	23	11	6	4	33	6	33	14	23	1	0	1	0	29	9	0
South Sudan	85	40	34	17	54	16	61	30	55	22	57	4	0	1	0	73	8	3
Sudan	29	7	15	15	14	2	24	10	18	11	12	4	2	0	0	26	2	0
Other	97	28	52	9	23	51	37	39	56	39	14	40	1	2	1	74	19	1
Total	428	156	233	105	145	126	257	140	282	155	166	85	4	11	4	345	68	5

95 The totals of cluster involvement are higher than the total of 428 submitted responses because some respondents indicated involvement in more than one cluster.
96 Where totals do not add up to 428, it is because a number of respondents did not answer the question.

Focus group discussion

As part of the data-collection phase, the evaluation team held a focus group session with the evaluation reference group to benefit from collective insights and reflection, particularly in light of the formative purpose of the exercise. Building on the emerging findings, the chosen topic for the FGD was that of "(co-)leadership". The two-hour online session, conducted in English, was an interactive one, whereby participants came together in smaller break-out rooms to discuss different questions related to (co-)leadership in detail, before concluding in plenary. The questions looked at concerned the leadership responsibilities that the CLA has (e.g. leadership styles and skills and where they sit in the CLA; what good cluster leadership looks like; and what aspects of the CLA's leadership responsibility can/could be shared).

Document review

Members of the reference group, including representatives from all clusters/sub-cluster at the global level and the UNICEF cluster co-ordination unit, were asked to share relevant documentation for analysis by the evaluation team (see table below). These documents were completed with documents retrieved by the evaluation team during the data-collection phase, particularly related to examples of country-level cluster strategies, and of documents outlining cluster co-leadership arrangements, where available.

The analysis of the documents was in a first step guided by the use of certain terms in the documents in line with the questions and sub-questions included in the evaluation matrix (Annex 2c below). In a second stage of document analysis, the evaluation team then searched for more specific terms and content, in line with the emerging findings.

	CLA Strategy Related	Cluster Strategy / Workplan	Results mapping / Evaluations	Issue-specific (CoP, Nexus, Localization, AAP, etc.)
IASC	Guideline, Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, Nov 2006; Guidance, Cluster Coordination at Country Level, 2015 Note on IASC Coordination Structures at Country Level, 2020 Joint UNCHR-OCHA Note Coordination in Mixed Settings, April 2014 Joint UNCH- OCHA letter, high-level strategic meeting, 2016 IASC guidance on provider of last resort, June 2008 IASC cluster coordination at country level, revised 2015 IASC reference module for the implementation of the humanitarian programme cycle, version 2.0, 2015	Operational snapshots 2019		
UNICEF	Cluster Coordination Guidance for Country Offices, 2015 Guidance for Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring, (2 powerpoint presentations), 2016 Cluster coordination performance monitoring - Guidance note, Jan 2016; coordinator and partner questionnaire Cluster coordination performance monitoring - Revised guidance, 2019 Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (incl. annexes) May 2020		CCPM results dashboard 2020	A review of UNICEF Approach to Localization Agenda in Humanitarian Action, inception report, Nov 2018
CP AoR	Note on CP AoR, field support team	CP AoR Annual Work Plan 2020–2021 CP AoR Strategy 2020–2024	Child Protection Area of Responsibility Annual Survey, 2018 CP AoR Consolidated Help Desk Report, 2018–2020 Evaluability Assessment of Child Protection in Humanitarian action, final draft report, Sep. 2019 Internal right review of RRT deployments, 2015–2018, findings ppt	Child Protection and COVID-19, Lessons Learned from East Asia and the Pacific, 2020 CP AoR, Note on Localization - World Humanitarian Summit Commitments Food Insecurity as a Driver of Child Protection Issues, 2020 Note on CP AoR work re: mental health and psychosocial support

	CLA Strategy Related	Cluster Strategy / Workplan	Results mapping / Evaluations	Issue-specific (CoP, Nexus, Localization, AAP, etc.)
Education	Coaching program for coordinated education in emergencies needs assessment and analysis (programme overview and syllabus) Country cluster core coordination training: Concept note Global education cluster coordination training package, Con-ceptual framework, 2018 Evaluation reports and participants lists from 2018 country core coordination trainings (Somalia, South Sudan, Syria); 2018 global/regional core coordination trainings (Antalya; Munyonyo); 2019 country core coordination trainings (Ukraine, DRC, Myanmar, Iraq, State of Palestine, Chad, Mali, Yemen, Bangladesh) 2019 global-regional core coordination trainings (Amman, Dakar, Geneva) Guide to coordinated education in emergencies needs as-sessments and analysis, August 2016 (full and summary) Guide to education in emergencies needs assessments, Aug. 2016	Terms of reference and work plan of the global education cluster cash task team Guide to developing education cluster strategies and summary (no date, 2018?) and tem-plate EC-WG strategies: Chad (EC thematic paper, ECW MYRPs), Iraq (EC strategy 2019, HRP 2017, 18, 19), Libya (HRP 2017, 19,19 + 2018 multi-sector needs assessment), Myanmar (mid-term review EiE sector strategy), Nigeria (NGO education sector strategy), Somalia (EC operational framework; road map toward resilience framework), Ukraine (cluster strat-egy), Yemen (HRP) 2017 Brussels meeting (annual partners meeting background paper; annual partners meeting report, summary points from meeting) 2019 Amman meeting (meeting framing pa-per; meeting report final, meeting summary report, joint identification of needs and analysis discussion paper, joint implementation and monitoring discussion paper, joint planning and review discussion paper, monitoring and reporting attacks on education discussion paper) GEC strategic plan, 2017–2019, Revision Au-gust, 2017	CCPM presentation CCPM Niger (2017), Somalia (2017), South Sudan (2018), Sudan (2017), Yemen (2017), CAR (prel), CxB (prel), DRC (prel) Education capacity self-assessment Bangladesh Myanmar midterm review EiE sector strategy, Oct. 2019 Somalia EC annual report, 2018 EC operational dashboard, 2018, 2019 Q2 Helpdesk dashboard, monitoring tool and satisfaction survey ECHO; mid-term evaluation for ERC funding, final report 2014 Final report - Evaluation of DG ECHO's Actions in the Field of Protection and Education of Children in Emergency and Crisis Situations (2008–2015) Strengthening the knowledge base for education in emergencies practitioners and partners (2019) – Rohingya refugee crisis case study; Ethiopia case study; Syria case study; UNICEF's Contribution to Education in Humanitarian Settings - Evaluation report, Nepal case study (draft), December 2019 Evaluation of the global education cluster action, 2017–2019: "Strengthening Coordination of Education in Emergencies", report and annexes	The Protective Role of Education in Emergencies, background paper Making Cash Transfers Work for Education Responses Framing Paper, No.v 2018 Cash Transfer Programming for Education in Emergencies, Nov. 2018 Study on cash transfer programming in education in emergencies, validation workshop meeting report, Oct. 2028 Considerations for cash and voucher assistance in education in emergencies needs assess-ments, checklist Documents re: cash training module Terms of reference and work plan of the global education cluster cash task team

	CLA Strategy Related	Cluster Strategy / Workplan	Results mapping / Evaluations	Issue-specific (CoP, Nexus, Localization, AAP, etc.)
Nutrition	Summary of capacity-building initiatives in cluster coordination and information management at global level - Scoping report for the global nutrition cluster, February 2020 PPT: Addressing capacity weaknesses of UNICEF as a CLA, suggested recommendations for discussion, Oct. 2018 Global nutrition cluster competency framework for cluster coordination Global nutrition cluster competency framework for information management Global nutrition cluster standard operating procedures, 2014 Nutrition cluster advocacy strategic framework, 2016–2019 Nutrition cluster coordination training, incl. on leadership styles (questionnaire)	GNC strategy, 2017–2020 GNC projects 2013–2018 (excel overview) GNC work plan, 2020	GNC annual reports 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019; GNC 2020 mid-year report Strengthening Nutrition in Humanitarian Action Phase 2: Supporting humanitarian cluster/sector co-ordination transition, synthesis review, 2016 GNC work plans 2015, 2016 and 2018; GNC work plan implementation summary, 2019	A review of UNICEF Approach to Localization Agenda in Humanitarian Action, inception report, Nov 2018
WASH		WASH roadmap, 2020–2025 Global WASH cluster strategic plan, 2016–2020, 18 July 2016 (final version) Organizational structure for the IASC global WASH cluster (adopted 2011, revised 2017) Global WASH cluster strategic plan, 2016–2020, MTR	Global Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH Programming in Protracted Crises, 2014–2019 (May 2020), incl. annexes and case studies for Cameroon, Lebanon, Somaliland, South Sudan 2020 mid-year report, global WASH cluster, August 2020 GWC Annual Report 2019	

Data analysis

Both the primary and secondary data were subject to content analysis, following an essentially interpretative approach, classifying findings with a view to providing concrete suggestions and recommendations. The triangulation of the perceptions of stakeholders reflected in interviews, survey responses and documents was key in developing a shared analysis, given that much of the data are qualitative in nature.

All interviews were coded using MAX-QDA software in order to ensure that all data collected relating to specific evaluation questions could be easily accessed and cross-analysed, and with a view to connecting certain topics with stakeholder opinions related to what works well and what does not as well as the enablers for and obstacles to UNICEF carrying out its (co-)CLA role well. The content analysis followed an exploratory approach, starting with a defined set of codes built from the evaluation questions, which was then refined as the analysis progressed to account for emerging findings.

The coding table for the interview analysis can be found in Annex 2d below.

Annex 2a – KII guidance

Following the criteria highlighted in the evaluation matrix, the semi-structured interviews with selected key informants will focus on the following lines of inquiry and sets of related questions.

The questions will be adjusted in relation to the type of stakeholder (UNICEF staff/non-UNICEF staff/global/country level, etc.).

In view of the purpose of the evaluation, the interviews will not follow a systematic questionnaire approach, but rather be shaped as dynamic conversations in which the interviewees will be asked to dig deeper into certain issues related to their specific roles and responsibilities.

Lines of inquiry	Questions
Introduction, confidentiality and consent	• As per the consent form shared with you, do we have your permission to list your name, title and organization in a list of people interviewed with the understanding that nothing you say will be attributed to you by name? • What's your role and how long have you been in the position? / What is your cluster involvement?

Lines of inquiry	Questions
Introduction, confidentiality and consent	• As per the consent form shared with you, do we have your permission to list your name, title and organization in a list of people interviewed with the understanding that nothing you say will be attributed to you by name? • What's your role and how long have you been in the position? / What is your cluster involvement?
Is UNICEF managing its CLA responsibilities in line with the principles/standards/roles of the cluster approach?	• What, in your view, are the main responsibilities of the cluster lead/co-lead? Why, and for what purpose? • In your experience, how would you say UNICEF is managing its CLA responsibilities? Would you say that it is meeting them? • In your knowledge, have specific investments been made toward fulfilling this role? • Do you find that UNICEF management arrangements within and beyond EMOPS provide a supportive and enabling environment for CLA? • In your view, what additional efforts could/ should UNICEF managers make to ensure that its CLA responsibilities are fulfilled in line with the principles/roles of the cluster approach?
Is UNICEF's CLA role aligned with the coordination and response needs of country-level clusters and/or other relevant coordination bodies?	• At the global level, clusters exist to strengthen system-wide capacity. Does UNICEF as cluster lead enable operational support to this effect? What kind? Is it enough? • Is UNICEF as CLA making efforts in terms of collective learning and innovation and supporting country-based clusters in these efforts as well? • Do you feel there is a connection between global and country-based clusters when it comes to understanding needs and expectations?

Lines of inquiry	Questions
Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to implement the commitments to localization, AAP, the HD nexus, and the centrality of protection?	• In your experience, what has UNICEF – as CLA – done to implement localization? AAP? The HD nexus? The centrality of protection? • Do you feel that UNICEF is following its own organizational policies in implementing these commitments in the framework of the cluster, or is UNICEF furthering a more cluster-specific approach to the commitments? • Do you think that the way in which UNICEF works toward these commitments as CLA is leading toward a positive result? • When it comes to the next steps in fulfilling these commitments, what could/should UNICEF do as CLA, in your opinion?

Has UNICEF as CLA made efforts to collectively understand and develop cluster responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in line with humanitarian standards	• What efforts are you aware of that UNICEF as CLA has made for the cluster to respond to COVID-19 and to prepare for further impact? Are they the right ones?
	
	• Do you know what actions UNICEF has taken to ensure humanitarian standards are used and adhered to in COVID-19 response (including Sphere, INEE, and CPMS)?
	
	• For country level: Do you feel that you have received relevant support and guidance from the global cluster under COVID-19?
	
	• In your opinion, what efforts could/should UNICEF make as CLA
	   - to further address COVID-19 and/or other future public health crises/crises where lessons from COVID-19 can apply?
	   - to understand the impact of COVID-19?

Lines of inquiry	Questions
Is UNICEF as CLA promoting and supporting the collective notion of leadership and the collective nature of the clusters?	• Do you think that UNICEF as CLA manages well to balance institution vs. cluster priorities? • Is UNICEF as CLA engaging with the cluster's SAG? • Are you aware of specific efforts made by UNICEF to equip its cluster coordinators with relevant skills and capacity? • What do you think could/should be done to better support a collective notion of leadership?
Is UNICEF as CLA promoting innovative approaches and initiatives?	• Do you feel that UNICEF, as CLA, pushes for innovative approaches and initiatives? Can you give any examples? • Where and how would you suggest the UNICEF could/should push better for innovative approaches?
Has UNICEF as the CLA taken steps to ensure that the cluster approach remains fit-for-purpose in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space)	• Do you feel that UNICEF as CLA makes an effort to ensure that the cluster's mission and goals remain relevant? What steps have been taken to this effect? • What do you think UNICEF could/should do to ensure that the cluster remains fit-for-purpose?
Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in the emergency response?	• Would you say generally that UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater predictability in the emergency response? How? • Would you say that UNICEF, as CLA, endeavours to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear? • Would you say that UNICEF, as CLA, enables a clear prioritization? • Do you find that clusters work in very different ways, and if so, does this have an impact? Is it linked to the CLA?

Lines of inquiry	Questions
Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater accountability in the emergency response?	• Would you say generally that UNICEF as CLA contributed to greater accountability in the emergency response? How? • Does UNICEF as CLA facilitate cluster accountability exercises such as peer review, self-reporting or evaluation? And to what degree are the outcomes shared with the IASC and/or the ERC, or other mechanisms? • What initiatives or efforts could/should be developed to strengthen accountability within the clusters and of the CLA?
Has UNICEF as CLA contributed to strengthened partnership in the emergency response?	• For UNICEF CLA staff: what do you know about the Principles of Partnership? • To what extent would you say that UNICEF as CLA has made efforts to empower cluster partners and develop a collective orientation in accordance with the *Principles of Partnership*? Can you give examples of such efforts? • To what extent is UNICEF as CLA making efforts in empowering diverse local actors as cluster partners? • What initiatives or efforts could/should be developed to strengthen partnerships within the clusters and of the CLA?
What is UNICEF as CLA doing to fulfil the mission, goals, and strategy of the cluster?	• Generally speaking, would you say that the way in which UNICEF has carried out its CLA role has a positive impact on the performance of the cluster? • Do you believe that UNICEF meets its CLA responsibilities in guiding cluster partners towards fulfilling the mission, goals and strategy of the cluster?
When/where has the POLR concept been invoked and what happened?	• Are you aware of any instance when the "provider of last resort" concept has been invoked? What happened?

Lines of inquiry	Questions
What leadership role is UNICEF as CLA playing on the issue of funding for the global/country-level clusters?	• Has UNICEF as CLA worked to leading on the issue of funding for the global/country-level clusters? Can you give examples of what has been done in this regard? • Would you say there is a need to change the work of UNICEF as CLA in resource mobilization and if so in what way?
Has UNICEF as CLA encouraged linkages with other relevant initiatives and partners beyond the cluster?	• What has UNICEF done as CLA in supporting connections with initiatives and networks that are outside the global clusters? Has it been successful in your view? • What could/should UNICEF do further to support connections with initiatives and networks that are outside the cluster?
How is UNICEF using its position as cluster lead agency to strengthen the connections between localization, AAP and the HD nexus?	• Do you see inter-linkages between the commitments to localization, AAP and the HD nexus? • Has UNICEF in its CLA role had a coherent approach to interconnecting the three commitments (localization, AAP and the HD nexus)? How have you seen this? • What could/should be done further in working toward a coherent approach to the three commitments?
What efforts have been made by the CLA to strengthen quality and identify gaps in the response?	• Do you think that UNICEF in its CLA role has managed to maintain quality and coverage (geographic and programmatic) of humanitarian needs? • What could/should UNICEF as CLA done differently here?

Annex 2b – Online survey

Survey on UNICEF's Role as Cluster (Co-)Lead Agency (CLARE II) & Global Education Cluster (GEC) Co-leadership.

Thank you for participating in this survey, rolled out in 29 countries, for global, regional and country-level stakeholders. The survey aims to gather perspectives from cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) (co-)leads/coordinators and cluster partners/counterparts on how well UNICEF is managing its cluster lead or co-lead responsibilities. If you are involved in the education cluster, you will also be asked to respond to a few questions that will feed into a separate review of the cluster co-leadership arrangement between UNICEF and Save the Children International. You will be given more information on this in the survey.

Please note:
- *This survey is being conducted in the context of the 'CLARE II' evaluation and the global education cluster (GEC) co-leadership review, which are two exercises that are managed by the UNICEF Evaluation Office. The answers to this survey will go directly to the independent team conducting the evaluation/review.*
- *This survey is NOT connected to the cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM), but an independent, global exercise.*
- *You will be asked for your active consent to participate in this survey on the next page.*

Responding to the questionnaire should take approximately 20-25 minutes. We ask that you kindly complete the survey before **30 April 2021**. If you have any questions or concerns about taking part in this survey, please feel free to contact (email).

There are 40 questions in this survey.

1. Consent

You are requested to answer all questions in relation to your particular context and role, but your responses will not be attributed to you. The survey is anonymous, and your responses will be aggregated with those of others to help inform country-level and global analysis.

Your participation is highly valuable, but it is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no negative consequences for you. If you decide to participate, you may stop at any time. You may also skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer. Thank you for responding to the best of your ability and as truthfully as possible.

By participating in this survey, you are giving your permission to use the information you are providing in this survey within the stipulations mentioned above.

Do you voluntarily consent to taking part in this survey? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Introduction

In which country do you work? Choose one of the following answers.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Afghanistan	☐ Bangladesh	☐ Burkina Faso
☐ Burundi	☐ Cameroon	☐ CAR
☐ Chad	☐ Colombia	☐ DRC
☐ Ethiopia	☐ Haiti	☐ Honduras
☐ Iraq	☐ Libya	☐ Mali
☐ Mozambique	☐ Myanmar	☐ Niger
☐ Nigeria	☐ State of Palestine	☐ Pakistan
☐ Somalia	☐ South Sudan	☐ Sudan
☐ Syria	☐ Ukraine	☐ Venezuela
☐ Yemen	☐ Zimbabwe	☐ Other

Which level do you work at? Choose one of the following answers.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Global	☐ Regional	☐ National
☐ Sub-national	☐ Other	☐

Where are you based at the sub-national level?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'sub-national' at question '3 [NatOrSubNat]' (Which level do you work at?)
Please write your answer here:

Where are you based at the regional level?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'regional' at question '3 [NatOrSubNat]' (Which level do you work at?)
Please write your answer here:

What type of organization do you work for? Choose one of the following answers.
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ International NGO	☐ National/local NGO	☐ UN agency
☐ Donor	☐ Government	☐ Other

What type of staff are you? Choose one of the following answers.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ National	☐ International	☐ Other

What is your gender? Choose one of the following answers.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Male	☐ Female	☐ Other

How familiar are you with the cluster system and what a cluster is expected to deliver?
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Very	☐ A little	☐ Not at all

Make a comment on your choice here:

Could you let us know how you acquired your level of knowledge of the cluster system and what a cluster is expected to deliver? More than one answer can be given:
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ I did not receive any training, but I became generally familiar with it through practical experience in humanitarian settings.

☐ I attended training and/or a workshop(s) that covered humanitarian coordination and the architecture of the system.

☐ I am/have been involved in co-leading a cluster.

☐ I am/have been part of a strategic advisory group (SAG).

☐ I became familiar with it in another way, namely (please specify):

Which cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) are you involved in? Check all that apply.
Please choose only one of the following:

☐   Child protection AoR   ☐   Education   ☐   Nutrition

☐   WASH   ☐   Other:

How are you involved in the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)? Choose one of the following answers.
NB: Throughout the survey, 'cluster partner' refers to anyone participating in a cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)/sub-national cluster.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐   Cluster (co-)lead/ coordinator   ☐   Cluster partner   ☐   Other

How many years have you been involved with this cluster/ How many years have you been involved with this cluster in your current location? Choose one of the following answer.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐   Less than 1 year   ☐   1-3 years   ☐   More than 3 years

3. Management of cluster (co-)lead agency responsibilities

To begin with, we are curious to gather your views on how UNICEF generally manages its cluster (co-)lead agency responsibilities, and whether it is aligned with the coordination and response needs of country level clusters/sub-clusters and/or other relevant coordination bodies.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure that the response is coordinated.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure that gaps are filled.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) supports robust advocacy, including calling on duty-bearers to fulfil their responsibilities.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) enables national capacity-building in preparedness and contingency planning.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, mobilizes resources for the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR).						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) supports adequate monitoring and evaluation of the response.						
The global cluster provides relevant support and guidance to the country-based cluster/sub-cluster (AoR).						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) supports service delivery.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, works to ensure the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) informs HCT strategic decision-making.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, facilitates the planning and implementation of the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) strategy.						

Comments or examples? Please write your answer here:

To what extent does UNICEF, as an organization, ensure that your needs, as a (co-)lead/coordinator, are met?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was '(co-)lead/coordinator' at question '12 [ClusterInvolvement]' (How are you involved in the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)? NB: Throughout the survey, 'cluster partner' refers to anyone participating in a cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)/sub-national cluster.)

Choose one of the following answers.

Please choose only one of the following:

☐   Fully

☐   Partially (please explain your answer in the comments box)

☐   Not at all (please explain your answer in the comments box)

Make a comment on your choice here:

To what extent do country-based cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) (co-)leads/coordinators ensure that your coordination needs, as cluster partner, are met?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'cluster partner' at question '12 [ClusterInvolvement]' (How are you involved in the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)? NB: Throughout the survey, 'cluster partner' refers to anyone participating in a cluster/sub-cluster (AoR)/sub-national cluster.)

Choose one of the following answers.

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Fully

☐ Partially (please explain your answer in the comments box)

☐ Not at all (please explain your answer in the comments box)

Make a comment on your choice here:

4. Predictability, accountability, partnership

According to the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination, at country level, the aim of the cluster approach is "to strengthen partnerships, and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations". We are curious to hear your views on the extent to which UNICEF as cluster (co-)lead agency has contributed to this aim.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, enables a clear prioritization of goals/activities within the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR).						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, contributes to greater accountability in the emergency response.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, contributes to strengthened partnerships in the emergency response.						
Generally speaking, the way in which UNICEF has carried out its cluster (co-)lead agency role has a positive impact on the performance of the cluster.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
Cluster partners are appropriately included, informed and consulted regarding strategic planning for the cluster.						
Generally speaking, UNICEF meets its cluster (co-)lead agency responsibilities.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, makes a sufficient distinction between its role as a cluster lead and its role as an agency funding implementing partners.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, promotes the interests of the collective response, rather than its interests as an individual agency.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, promotes joint reflection on the cluster's performance at least once a year.						

Comments or examples? Please write your answer here:

5. Efforts to implement commitments

Since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the adoption of the Grand Bargain, a number of reform priorities have dominated the humanitarian agenda and have played a major role in the work of the clusters, including the role and involvement of local actors in humanitarian response (known as "localization"); accountability to affected populations; and the humanitarian-development (-peace) nexus. These commitments, as well as the 2013 commitment to the centrality of protection, require an extra effort in leadership terms. We are therefore curious to gather your views on the extent to which UNICEF as cluster (co-)lead agency has made efforts to implement these reform priorities.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
The way in which UNICEF carries out its cluster (co-)lead agency role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to localization.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
The way in which UNICEF carries out its cluster (co-) lead agency role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to accountability to affected populations.						
The way in which UNICEF carries out its cluster (co-) lead agency role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to the humanitarian-development nexus.						
The way in which UNICEF carries out its cluster (co-) lead agency role leads to positive results vis-à-vis the commitment to the centrality of protection.						

Comments or examples? Please write your answer here:

6. Cluster responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

The issues emerging from the COVID-19 response will help define UNICEF's cluster (co-)lead agency agenda in the coming years. Part of this perspective will be to examine the practical use and added value of COVID-19 guidance and related materials made available by the global clusters and by the leadership of the country-based clusters/sub-clusters (AoR).

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
UNICEF understands and approaches leadership as a collective endeavour (e.g. encourages cluster/ sub-cluster (AoR) partners to lead certain thematic discussions, take initiatives, etc).						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, promotes innovative approaches and initiatives.						
UNICEF, as cluster (co-)lead agency, makes an effort to ensure that the cluster/sub-cluster (AoR) mission and goals remain relevant in light of the changing environment (incl. humanitarian space).						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
As a partner or (co-)lead/coordinator, I feel adequately involved in defining priorities for the cluster.						
As a partner or (co-)lead/coordinator, I feel I have adequate input into strategic decision-making for the cluster.						

Do you have any further comments or suggestions regarding the way in which UNICEF carries out its cluster (co-)lead sgency role?

Please choose only one of the following:

Annex 2c – Document Review Guidance

Criteria	Code	Description/Indicator
Relevance and appropriateness	CLA reference	Mention of terms "cluster lead agency", "lead agency" or "CLA"
	Operationalisation Standards	Evidence of efforts to operationalize the principles into cluster strategy, policy guidance and tools (proportion of cluster/AoR policies, procedures, tools and guidance that clearly reflect and operationalize all IASC cluster standards and policies)
	CLA Investment	Evidence of investments made to support cluster leadership, leadership approaches, and leadership development of cluster coordinator
	Operational Support	Evidence and type of support provided to country-based clusters
	Localisation	Evidence of efforts made to operationalize the commitment to localization within the cluster approach
	AAP	Evidence of efforts made to operationalize the commitment to AAP within cluster the approach
	HDNexus	Evidence of efforts made to operationalize the commitment to the nexus within the cluster approach
	Centrality Protection	Evidence of efforts made to operationalize the centrality of protection within the cluster approach
	COVID-19 Response	Evidence of efforts made as CLA to respond to COVID-19
	COVID-19 Impact	Evidence of efforts made as CLA to understand the impact of COVID-19
	Collective Effort	Evidence of efforts by UNICEF to promote and support a collective notion of leadership/collective nature of the clusters
	Innovative Approaches	Evidence of innovative approaches taken by country level cluster as well as globally
Effectiveness	Predictability-roles	Evidence of efforts to ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities
	Predictability-prioritisation	Evidence of efforts to ensure clear prioritization
	Accountability	Evidence of efforts to facilitate accountability exercises
	Partnerships	Evidence of efforts to empower cluster partners and develop a collective orientation
	Global Cluster Funding	Evidence of efforts made by the CLA in resource mobilization at the global level
	POLR	Evidence of POLR being invoked

Criteria	Code	Description/Indicator
Coordination/ Coherence	Linkages Beyond Cluster	Type of engagement with outside initiatives and the degree to which these efforts are seen as complementary or as benefit to the work of the global cluster
	Linkages Commitments	Evidence of efforts to ensure a coherent approach toward the three commitments (localization, AAP, HD nexus)
	Promote Coherence	Evidence of efforts to engage with other clusters to promote coherent approaches

Annex 2d – KII Coding Table

Criteria	Code	Description/Indicator
Relevance and appropriateness	Core functions	Discussion/examples around degree to which UNICEF carries out core CLA functions well
	CLA role v agency management	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF maintains a balance between acting in the interests of UNICEF as UNICEF (acting for own institution) and UNICEF as CLA (acting as CLA)
	Technical v strategic	Discussion around UNICEF as CLA maintaining balance or not between technical and strategic focus
	Information Management	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA ensures good information management
	Resource mobilisation	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA ensures resource mobilization for the cluster
	Strengthening capacity	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA ensures the strengthening of capacity of cluster partners
	Operational support or not	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA ensures the cluster provides operational support where needed
	CLA Investment/Commitment	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA is invested/shows commitment to this role through for example funding, or investment in e.g. leadership development of cluster coordinator, etc. Also includes degree to which KIIs see that UNICEF senior leadership is invested in the CLA role.
	State/subnational level coordination	Discussion around state/sub-national level CLA efforts
	Localisation	Discussion/examples of efforts made by CLA to operationalize the commitment to localization within the cluster approach
	AAP	Discussion/examples of efforts made by CLA to operationalize the commitment to AAP within cluster the approach

Criteria	Code	Description/Indicator
	HDNexus	Discussion/examples of efforts made by CLA to operationalize the commitment to the nexus within the cluster approach
	Centrality Protection	Discussion/examples of efforts made by CLA to operationalize the centrality of protection within the cluster approach
	Advocacy	Discussion around the degree to which UNICEF as CLA makes efforts to engage in advocacy on behalf of the cluster
	COVID-19 Response	Discussion/examples of efforts made as CLA to respond to COVID-19
	COVID-19 Impact	Discussion/examples of efforts made as CLA to understand the impact of COVID-19
	Collective Effort	Discussion/examples of efforts by UNICEF to promote and sup-port a collective notion of leadership/collective nature of the clusters
	Remaining fit for purpose	Discussion around the degree to which UNICEF as CLA endeavours to remain fit-for-purpose
	Innovative Approaches	Discussion around the degree to which UNICEF as CLA strives for innovative approaches
Effectiveness	Predictability	Discussion/examples efforts to ensure predictability through clarity in roles and responsibilities or clear prioritization
	Global Cluster support/ linkages	Discussion around the degree to which the global cluster supports the work of UNICEF as CLA at country level
	Accountability (cluster)	Discussion/examples of efforts to facilitate accountability exercises
	Partnerships	Discussion/examples of efforts to develop a collective orientation in light of partnership principles
	POLR	Discussion/examples of POLR being invoked
	Gaps Response	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA ensures the cluster adequately responds to gaps in response
Coordination/ Coherence	Working across clusters	Discussion around type of engagement with outside initiatives and the degree to which these efforts are seen as complementary or as benefit to the work of the global cluster
	Linkages Commitments	Discussion/examples of efforts to ensure a coherent approach towards the three commitments (localization, AAP, HD nexus)
	Promote Coherence	Discussion/examples of efforts to engage with other clusters to promote coherent approaches
	Collective effort or not	Degree to which UNICEF as CLA engages the cluster in a collective leadership approach

Criteria	Code	Description/Indicator
Enablers/ Obstacles raised	Personalities	Mention of personalities/personal capacities as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role
	Competition	Mention of competition (internal or external) as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role
	Comes down to incentives	Mention of incentives being required to ensure UNICEF carries the CLA role well
	Context/momentum	Mention of the context as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role
	Funding	Mention of the availability of funding as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role
	HR concerns	Mention of HR-related factors as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role. This includes mention of turnover among staff.
	Mismatch/asymmetry/push pull	Mention of asymmetry in interests between UNICEF and cluster partners or cluster co-lead as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role.
	Power role/imbalances	Mention of the comparatively strong role/size of UNICEF in the humanitarian system as influencing the degree to which it can carry out its CLA role well or not.
	Division of labour/roles	Mention of clarity in division of labour/roles and responsibilities as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role. This includes mention of ability to share heavy workload.
	Communication	Mention of clear communication/transparency in the cluster as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries out the CLA role well.
	Pressure on coordinators/IMO	Mention of pressure on coordinators/IMO (frequently related to workload or competing interests) as influencing degree to which UNICEF is a good CLA.
	For own agency not collective	Discussion around degree to which UNICEF as CLA operates in the interest of the collective or not
	Double-hatting	Mention of coordinators/IMOs being double-hatted or not influencing the degree to which UNICEF is a good CLA
	Trust	Mention of trust among partners in the cluster as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role well
	Institutional support/Internal UNICEF	Mention of the degree to which UNICEF is internally set up to support the CLA role as influencing the degree to which UNICEF carries the CLA role well. Includes references to support for/ understanding of CLA role from country rep and UNICEF senior management.
	Reporting lines	Mention of UNICEF reporting lines as allowing for UNICEF to carry out the CLA role well or not
	Relationship with government	Mention of UNICEF's relationship with the government as influencing the degree to which it carries out the CLA role well or not
	Cluster system	Mention of the cluster system per se as an obstacle/the degree to which UNICEF carries out the CLA role well or not depends on the system rather than on UNICEF
	Lack of overall clarity/vision	Mention of an overall lack of clarity/vision on behalf of UNICEF as to the meaning/importance of the CLA role as influencing how it carries out the role

ANNEX 3 — TERMS OF REFERENCE

TITLE/PURPOSE	*Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Role as Cluster (co-)Lead Agency (Revised May 2020)*
RECRUITING OFFICER	*Senior Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF Evaluation Office*
CONTRACT MODALITY	*Individual contracts*
LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT	*Home-based; travel to various regional offices and countries offices and UNICEF New York tbd (conditions allowing)*
LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED	*English*
DURATION OF CONTRACT	*March 2020 – November 2020*

Background

The cluster approach was introduced in 2005 within the wider context of humanitarian reform by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). It was in recognition that a lack of adequate coordination had previously hampered the relevance, timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian response. Defined as the designated responsibility for multi-actor sectoral coordination, the approach was introduced as a means to strengthen predictability, response capacity, coordination and accountability, by strengthening partnerships in key sectors of humanitarian response, and by formalizing the lead role of particular agencies/organizations in each of these sectors. Its weaknesses in the 2010 Haiti earthquake response were a key factor in stimulating the 'transformative agenda' reforms that followed. The cluster approach includes nine areas of sectoral coordination and two common service clusters that enable the other sectors. It also includes four 'areas of responsibility' (or AORs) within the global

protection cluster (GPC), in recognition of the unique coordination needs in this specialized area.[97]

The IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination stipulates six core functions of a country-level cluster, alongside the strengthening of partnerships and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action:[98]

1. Support service delivery by: providing a platform that ensures service delivery is driven by the humanitarian response plan and strategic priorities; and developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery.

2. Inform strategic decision-making of the humanitarian coordinator (HC) and the humanitarian country team (HCT) by: preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities; identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues; and formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.

3. Plan and implement cluster strategies by: developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives; applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines; clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing on cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.

4. Monitor and evaluate performance by: monitoring and reporting on activities and needs; measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results; and recommending corrective action where necessary.

5. Contingency planning/ preparedness/national capacity-building where needed and where capacity exists within the cluster.

6. Support robust advocacy by identifying concerns and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action; and undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members and affected people.

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97 The sectoral clusters, and their respective cluster leads are: nutrition (UNICEF), health (WHO), water, sanitation and hygiene (UNICEF), food security (WFP/FAO), education (UNICEF/Save the Children), emergency shelter (UNHCR/IFRC). The cross-cutting clusters are: camp coordination/management (UNHCR/IOM), protection (UNHCR), and early recovery (UNDP). The common ser vice clusters, and their respective cluster leads are: logistics (WFP) and emergency telecommunications (WFP).

98 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach

UNICEF's leadership and coordination responsibilities at country level

UNICEF aims to meet humanitarian needs in a timely, appropriate, effective and efficient manner, in adherence with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality,[99] impartiality,[100] and independence,[101] and in line with UNICEF's Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) and equity approach, endeavouring to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized. Complex high-threat environments can pose significant challenges to these principles and objectives, including in working with other humanitarian partners to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations. Under humanitarian reform, sector coordination among the wider humanitarian country team is guided by the IASC cluster approach.

UNICEF is the cluster lead agency (CLA) for three clusters: nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and, as co-CLA with Save the Children, education. In addition, UNICEF is focal point agency for the child protection AOR.[102] Together, these responsibilities render

UNICEF the agency with the most clusters and AORs under its remit. Its cluster coordination accountabilities are enshrined in the organization's CCCs, one of the main normative sources guiding its work in emergencies.[103]

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 frames goals, objectives and strategies around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (particularly the principles of 'leaving no one behind' and 'reaching the furthest behind first') and the Agenda for Humanity (including the Grand Bargain and the 'new way of working'). The UNICEF results framework is structured around five outcome-oriented goals, and humanitarian action is a cross-cutting issue with emphasis on quality and reach (i.e. coverage), gendered outcomes, the centrality of protection, localization, improved risk management and improved coordination through clusters.

The terms of reference of cluster coordinators **at the field level** include advocating for protection mainstreaming in the humanitarian response; establishing coordination mechanisms, ensuring coordination with

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99   Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

100 Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinion.

101 Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regards to the areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

102 The AOR focal point agency role entails the same accountabilities as a CLA. UNICEF also contributes funding toward the co-chair position within the IASC mental health and psychosocial support reference group.

103 See revised CCCs.

government counterparts and other relevant authorities; and ensuring that timely and effective needs assessments are undertaken. Also, each cluster is responsible for integrating early recovery from the outset of the humanitarian response. The resident coordinator/HC may recommend that an early recovery cluster also be established.

At the country office level, the UNICEF representative is, in particular, responsible for:[104]

- Ensuring accountability to the HC through the effective functioning of the UNICEF led and co-led clusters/AoRs;

- Enabling clusters/AoRs to function effectively through: timely appointment of adequate number of appropriately experienced staff; availability/accessibility of adequate administrative, logistical and office services to clusters; availability of funding for coordination functions; effective and supportive management of cluster staff; and representation of and advocacy on behalf of cluster(s) at HCT and in other fora;

- Advocating on behalf of the clusters AoRs on various issues, including funding, and in various fora including with HCTs, government, donors and partners for adherence to standards and guidelines;

- Ensuring quality and coherence of cluster plans in line with the strategic direction agreed by the HCT and in line with the humanitarian response plan;

- Monitoring the implementation of corrective strategies and activities to address poor cluster performance against plans, objectives and targets;

- Ensuring quality and coherence of cluster and UNICEF programme, preparedness plans and capacity-building;

- Ensuring child-specific protection concerns are reflected in HCT protection strategies and overall approach to deliver on centrality of protection commitments;

- Engaging consistently toward the fulfilment of the cluster's mission when acting as a cluster partner within and in support of other clusters (health, protection, food security etc.);

- Proactively engaging in discussion, analysis and decision-making on activation of clusters and AORs in-country, and alert the global cluster coordination unit (GCCU) if guidance or support is required;

- In consultation with cluster partners, engaging in HCT discussion on planning for viable and realistic transition/deactivation of clusters and AoRs and review of the existing co-ordination architecture, while ensuring that GCCU is informed accordingly. This

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104   http://www.unicefinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Clusters/2016-11-05%20Reps%20Note%20-%20UNICEFs%20 Leadership%20and%20Coordination%20Responsibilities%20at%20Country%20Level.pdf

work must involve advocacy with relevant government sectors to ensure continued optimal coordination through sector working groups;

- Provider of last resort: where a cluster is activated, the CLA must be ready to ensure provision of services to fill critical gaps, identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-HCT led humanitarian response plan, when access, security and funds are in place.

Relevant findings from recent evaluations[105]

Global cluster evaluations

Given the role of clusters in humanitarian action, and the need for agencies to continuously learn and improve, various evaluations of CLA roles have been undertaken by agencies in recent years. Other than the UNICEF CLARE evaluation in 2013,[106] in 2013, the global protection cluster commissioned a study on protection funding in complex humanitarian emergencies.[107] The

World Food Programme (WFP commissioned, together with the Government of Netherlands, and in conjunction with the UNICEF Evaluation Office, a global logistics cluster evaluation (2011–2012),[108] and WFP and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) undertook an evaluation of the food security cluster in 2013–2014.[109] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also undertook an evaluation of its leadership of the global protection cluster and field protection (2014–2016).[110] In 2015, a whole-of-system review of protection was undertaken by the IASC. Also, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) undertook an evaluation of the global clusters for early recovery in 2018.[111]

Findings from previous UNICEF evaluations [112]

The following are some of the findings from evaluations that UNICEF conducted at both country and global levels, which included assessments of its cluster leadership role in humanitarian evaluations.

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105   See Annex II with list of cluster evaluations undertaken by Agencies

106   2013 Global Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action (CLARE)

107   UNHCR, Placing protection at the centre of humanitarian action - Study on Protection Funding in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, 2013

108   Joint Global Logistics Cluster Evaluation commissioned jointly by WFP & Government of Netherlands in conjunction with the Evaluation Office, UNICEF, 2012

109   FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action: A Strategic Evaluation

110   Evaluation of UNHCR'S Leadership of the Global Protection Cluster and Field Protection Clusters: 2014-2016 (2017)

111   https://reliefweb.int/report/world/evaluation-global-cluster-early-recovery#:~:text=As%20a%20Cluster%20Lead%20Agen cy%2C%20UNDP%20has%20commissioned,where%20clusters%2Fsectors%20were%20formally%20activated%20by%20 the%20IASC.

112   See Annex III of the TOR with additional findings from recent evaluations.

1. Positive examples of UNICEF CLA work

- The 2013 cluster lead agency evaluation (CLARE) found evidence that **UNICEF has invested significantly in implementing its CLA role since the IASC cluster system was set up and was increasingly implementing its CLA roles well**. The evaluation concluded, however, that UNICEF's ability to carry out its CLA role well is limited because it is undertaking its activities in more situations and over a prolonged period of time above and beyond the role that activated clusters are designed to play. This cluster 'mission creep' stretches resources by spreading efforts and resources over more countries; there are no clear, established priorities that are based on risk; and this limits the ability of global clusters to provide high-quality support.

- This cluster 'mission creep' is driven by internal and external stakeholders, including donors and national governments, with competing interests, and contextual factors such as gaps in non-cluster systems for preparedness and sectoral development coordination. While a significant amount of cluster mission creep is linked to how the overarching system has employed clusters, UNICEF's own lack of consistency in advocating for cluster rationalization at country level is also a factor.

- Evaluations have shown that one of UNICEF's 'added values' to sectors is its coordination efforts and ability to allocate resources to management of clusters, working groups and partnership arrangements. In the response to the Gaza conflict,[113] UNICEF boosted its cluster coordination role in all sectorss, and was able to provide surge support. Inter-sector coordination (between the clusters) was reported to be relatively strong in Yemen.[114] The working relationship between the health and WASH clusters, in particular, was good, and they worked closely together to produce the integrated response plan around which the response was largely built. Also, UNICEF's position enabled a high or very high level of collaboration and coordination, not only with line ministries but also with the other sector stakeholders such as donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[115]

- An evaluation synthesis of humanitarian evaluations[116] undertaken by the Evaluation Office (2017) found UNICEF to have fulfilled its role for cluster/pillar coordination as far as feasible in the Typhoon Haiyan,

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113   State of Palestine: Evaluation for Humanitarian Action for Children (2017)
114   Evaluation of the Level 3 Response to the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen: A Crisis within a Crisis (2018)
115   Global Evaluation of UNICEF's Drinking Water Supply Programming in Rural Areas and Small Towns, 2006–2016 (2018)
116   Towards Improved Emergency Responses: Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010–2016 (2017)

Central African Republic and Mali crises, with its commitment to recruit long-term staff for coordination praised. According to the WASH humanitarian synthesis (2017),[117] UNICEF provided consistently strong cluster leadership in WASH, and ensured coherence with the work of its partners. The UNICEF-led WASH cluster also stood out positively in the Horn of Africa drought response in 2011. WASH teams are generally considered to be legitimate, proactive and effective cluster leaders, maintaining strong links with and between cluster members and partners. UNICEF WASH played a positive role in joint leadership and in the transition from cluster to national coordination. Both are important factors to supporting and maintaining government ownership and capacity in humanitarian response.

• The 2017 stunting evaluation[118] shows that UNICEF plays a crucial role in coordinating nutrition components within a global framework, conceptualizing stunting reduction programmes, and providing leadership as part of the nutrition cluster; NGOs also indicated that UNICEF shows leadership in the cluster coordination meetings, and shares findings about the nutritional data, both national and regional, as well as the evolution of the infant and young child feeding (IYCF) strategy and its implementation.

• The Evaluation of UNICEF Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations (CHTE) (2018)[119] has examples of how UNICEF's role as cluster lead agency has influenced the coverage and quality achieved by the collective humanitarian system. It finds that UNICEF has used its role as CLA to strengthen the coverage and quality of the response to complex humanitarian emergencies. The case studies highlighted good practices in identifying and filling gaps in the humanitarian response, promoting contextualized standards and strengthening the capacity of partners to meet these standards.

• After Typhoon Damrey in 2017, UNICEF Philippines supported education officials in gaining capacity to apply emergency needs assessment tools, enhanced coordination and leveraged partnerships through the coordination mechanism and education cluster system in which UNICEF is the co-lead agency.[120]

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117 Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of WASH in Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016 (2017)
118 Reducing Stunting in Children Under-5 years of Age: A Comprehensive Evaluation of UNICEF's Strategies and Programme Performance (2017)
119 Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (2018)
120 Evaluation of UNICEF's Disaster Risk Reduction Programming in Education in East Asia and the Pacific (2018)

- The evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Lake Chad Basin Crisis (2018)[121] found that the education cluster, with UNICEF as co-leader, is an effective advocate for education in humanitarian and emergency situations, promoting prevention and preparedness in the education sector. Also, the evaluation pointed out that the government leadership in the cluster system is important to promote accountability and ownership. The evaluation also highlights that UNICEF engagement in global and regional partnerships for disaster risk reduction (DRR) in education and in the clusters has contributed to efficiency in terms of agreement on methods and models and joint advocacy.[122] The same evaluation found that effective leadership in nutrition has been provided through the cluster mechanism and UNICEF has played a critical role in providing the core pipeline of commodities required for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

- The recent UNICEF corporate evaluation on WASH in protracted crises (2020) found several positive examples on where UNICEF helped strengthen central government through supporting the development of policies, strategies and guidance. Its further suggests that, at the individual crisis level, it largely met minimum requirements of coordinating sector partners activities. At the global level, the global WASH cluster (GWC) was seen as the best expression of UNICEF leadership for WASH in protracted crises.

2. Some areas for further improvements are also noted in various evaluations:

- Evaluations find that sometimes coordination mechanisms do not work well. The coordination of the 2017 response in Yemen appeared confused, with multiple mechanisms overlapping and running in parallel. In particular, the respective roles of the clusters (health/WASH) and of the emergency operation centres (EOCs) were poorly defined. In the Ebola crisis, UNICEF lacked the relationships and technical skills to fulfil its lead coordination role. In the Philippines, coordination lost momentum, dissipating once the original coordinating teams left the country.

- The placement of junior staff as cluster coordinators in at least two Level-3 emergencies (Haiti and the Horn of Africa) resulted in these important coordination roles becoming secondary to the priorities of more senior programme staff. Evaluations have also found cluster leadership positions that have been vacant for months on end,

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121 Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Lake Chad Basin Crisis in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria (2018)
122 ibid

with UNICEF sectoral staff sometimes double-hatting, and an over-reliance on stand-by partners to support such roles. In some countries and contexts, evaluations have found that it is difficult to attract experienced staff due to security, levels of the job, etc. In this respect, the recent evaluation of the global education cluster (GEC) action (2020) flagged the need for dedicated (i.e. not 'double-hatted') cluster coordinators with the right competencies, fixed-term contracts and enough time and space to carry out their work. The evaluation also made a case for a dedicated information management officer as a critical condition to assure the functionality of the education cluster/working groups (WGs).

- Shortcomings in the wider United Nations coordination of emergency responses, including within the cluster system, have been widely documented. The wider cluster system's comparatively siloed approach impedes cross-sectoral links. At the same time, recent inter-agency humanitarian evaluations have highlighted several weaknesses of the clusters (collectively, rather than specific to UNICEF) in key areas linked to coverage and quality, including the accuracy of cluster assessment data and coverage figures (South Sudan, Typhoon Haiyan), the adequacy and effectiveness of cluster monitoring systems (CAR, South Sudan, Typhoon Haiyan); and information management and gathering and sharing data on needs, locations and agencies. UNICEF evaluations have also highlighted the limited knowledge management systems which impede the absorption of learning produced.

- The CHTE (2018) also finds that while UNICEF and other CLAs have significant scope to influence both coverage and quality through leadership of the clusters, an important limitation highlighted by cluster staff was the variable access they had to sufficient resources and the limitations of accountability within the cluster, which can significantly limit its influence. In this respect, the evaluation of the GEC action (2020) suggested the need for the UNICEF representative and Save the Children (STC) country director to invest strategically in the education cluster/WG as an effective means to fulfil their obligations to children and hold themselves accountable and meet collective targets.

- A number of evaluations have pointed out that cluster/working group members were not as satisfied with the cluster system and its ability to contribute to effective and efficient responses to crises and eliminate gaps and overlaps.

- There has been a general tendency among UNICEF staff to overestimate the coverage of their interventions in all sectors, to the detriment of a more efficient coordination at the sector/cluster level, especially in terms of filling out the "Who Does What Where" matrix (3Ws) or the "Who is Where Doing What" matrix (4Ws). •

- The evaluation synthesis (2017) also finds UNICEF's leadership at the country level to be broadly effective, though roles at the regional and global levels are not always clear. For example, it was unclear what roles the regional offices and regional emergency advisers are playing in the cluster system.

- The recent UNICEF corporate evaluation on WASH in protracted crises (2020) suggests a mixed performance of UNICEF as CLA. While acknowledging positive examples (mentioned above), the evaluation found that the nature of the coordination provided tended to be on operational issues rather than leadership in encouraging a long-term perspective. Moreover, UNICEF's performance as CLA was seen as affected by investment and staffing challenges, as well as its double-hatting and provider of last resort (PLR) roles. At the global level, UNICEF was widely considered to have lost ground at all levels in terms of thought leadership in WASH in protracted crises.

3. Select recommendations from evaluations are noted below:

- The need to develop a "cluster-ready" initiative to increase country office preparedness for cluster activation in high-risk countries.

- Strengthening UNICEF-wide management systems to support the CLA role, including strengthening the role of regional offices and better connecting country representatives to a global CLA strategic management structure.

- Developing integrated strategy for human resources surge capacity and UNICEF coordination staff development. Also, the need to recruit cluster leads at reasonable levels, and with more predicable funds to attract competent staff.

- Expanding and enhancing partnerships wherever possible with national and local governments and national CSOs to ensure to more field presences.

- Strengthening the coordination and communication skills of UNICEF staff leading clusters and sectoral working groups, especially at the field office level. This would include the provision of basis and intermediate training and skills/building workshops on such topics as effective communication, coordination, joint planning and use of monitoring data for decision-making.

- Increasing coherence (interpretation and articulation) and the fidelity (understanding and consistent application) through UNICEF CLA policy and practice.

- Focusing to enhancing coverage and quality of humanitarian programming.

- Mitigating the use of clusters in inappropriate scenarios by developing models and tools for non-cluster coordination, including transition points

for country offices, and establish clarity on the role of clusters, for national capacity-building to ensure efficient and fit-for-purpose coordination approaches.

- Revising the level and modality of engagement of cluster members to ensure good functioning at central and decentralized levels. Also working towards strengthening inter-cluster coordination mechanisms.

- A greater focus on preventive interventions that are more appropriate to strengthen responsiveness towards addressing the need for climate-change resiliency.

Such findings and recommendations seek to enhance learning by drawing lessons, identifying opportunities and providing information for UNICEF to improve its capacities, systems and approaches for exercising its CLA role at the country and global levels.

Rationale for the evaluation

Humanitarian needs have been growing steadily in scale and complexity. The number of people targeted by humanitarian assistance increased by over 30 per cent globally over the years 2014–2018[123] and, with conflict remaining the main driver of humanitarian needs,[124] humanitarian crises are now estimated to last nine years on average.[125] In 2018 alone, 90 UNICEF country offices (COs) responded to a total of 285 humanitarian situations of diverse nature covering health (87), socio-political (68), natural disasters (80), nutrition (22) and refugee issues (28).[126] Figure 1 illustrates the linear growth in the number of humanitarian situations globally relative to UNICEF's COs. UNICEF's role and investments in emergencies has also grown along with the escalating needs. Between 2014 and 2018 humanitarian funds appealed for through the Humanitarian Action for Children report (HAC) grew by over 70 per cent (figure 2), and in 2018 alone 50 per cent of all UNICEF expenses was directed toward supporting humanitarian action during the year.[127]

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123 From 77 to 101 million (UNICEF, Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report 2018).
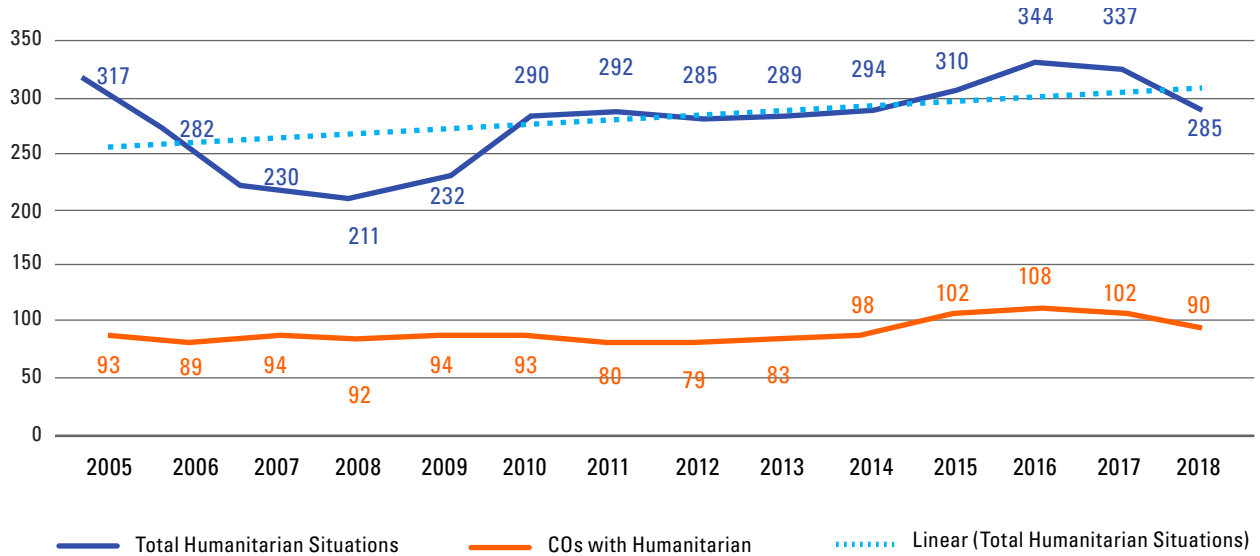124 UNICEF 2020 Humanitarian Appeal Overview.
125 Global Humanitarian Overview, 2019
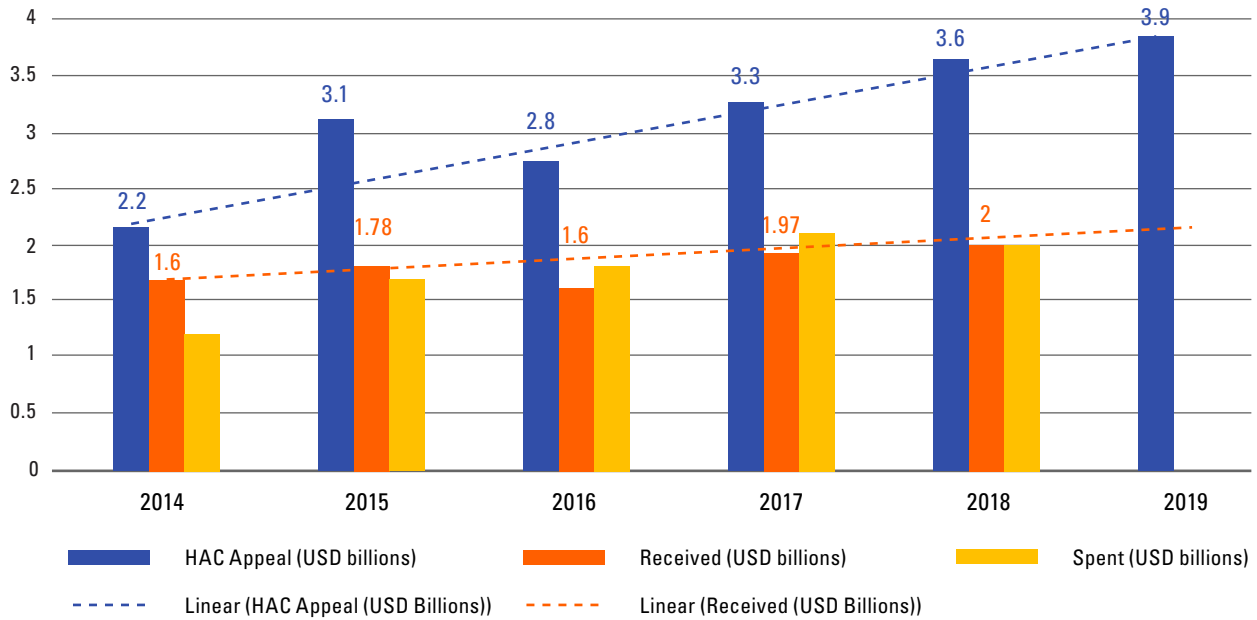126 UNICEF, Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report 2018.
127 E/ICEF/2019/12.

FIGURE 1

Humanitarian Situations, 2005-2018

Source: UNICEF, Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report 2018 (left) and UNICEF HAC 2014-19 and HAS 2014-18 (right)

FIGURE 2

HAC Appeal, USD Received & Spent 2014-2019

Source: UNICEF, Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report 2018 (left) and UNICEF HAC 2014-19 and HAS 2014-18 (right)

From a **global perspective**, required funds for humanitarian response plans also experienced growing trends between 2014–2018, as did funds received, with a small exception in 2015 (see figure 3).

Source: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2020
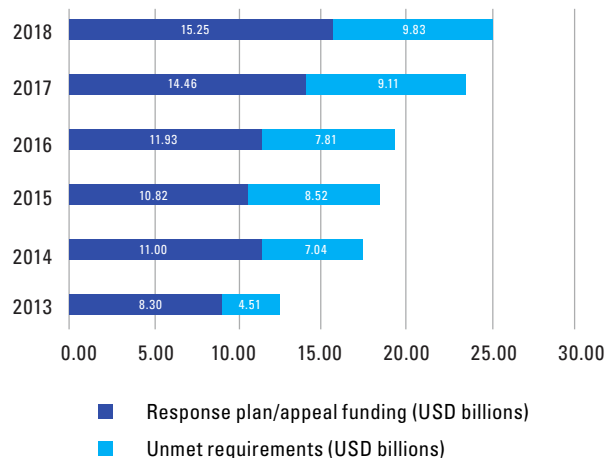
In this operating context, UNICEF as an agency, together with its partners, has been **delivering results** which included, in 2018 alone, providing access to safe water to 43.6 million people, treatment programmes for 3.4 million children with severe and acute malnutrition and formal/non-formal basic education for 6.9 million children.[128]   The snapshot of humanitarian aid delivered globally in 2019, as outlined in the 2020 Global Humanitarian Overview,[129] gives a further sense of the magnitude of the **collective humanitarian** response over the year, reporting, among key achievements, that 28.9 million children were vaccinated against measles, 6.9 million children (6-59 months), pregnant and lactating women with acute malnutrition were newly admitted for treatment and 61 % per cent of refugee children worldwide attended primary school.

Across these responses, UNICEF had specific **inter-agency coordination responsibilities** to mobilize, lead and coordinate collective efforts through its cluster (co-) lead agency roles in WASH, nutrition, education and the child protection (CP) AoR. Also, UNICEF continues to invest considerable human and financial resources in fulfilling its CLA role since the cluster approach was rolled out in 2005. In 2018 between 17 and 19 UNICEF COs had a designated staff member to lead or co-lead sectors or clusters.

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128 UNICEF, Humanitarian Action, Global Annual Results Report 2018.
129 https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf

As noted above, evaluations, reviews and other exercises have pointed out that positive progress continues to be seen in CLA roles and responsibilities, yet challenges remain, and gaps and bottlenecks have been specifically highlighted in certain clusters and countries.

In this context, and seven years after the last CLARE was conducted, **UNICEF EO is commissioning an evaluation of UNICEF's cluster lead agency role in humanitarian action II (CLARE)**. The initial terms of reference (ToR) for this evaluation had been drafted as COVID-19 was just starting to affect lives (and UNICEF's response across the world). In May 2020 the document was therefore adjusted to incorporate a 'COVID-19 lens' to ensure that the evaluation's purpose and objectives remained relevant and served the purpose of generating highly useful evidence in both the current context and the 'post-COVID-19 world'.

Purpose and objectives

This evaluation will have a strong **learning purpose,** while also supporting **accountability** of UNICEF's cluster (co-) leadership responsibilities toward its partners and communities affected by humanitarian crises. The evaluation will ***formatively* draw lessons** for UNICEF to be better equipped to exercise systematic, high-quality cluster (co-) leadership

in both its technical and coordination aspects. The forward-looking aspect, which will more broadly contribute to strengthening the ways in which agencies define and strive for more effective coordination, is particularly relevant in the context of **escalating humanitarian needs,** the opportunities and added requirements of the various ongoing or **recent reform processes**[130] and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis should indeed not only represent an opportunity for this evaluation to reflect further on the ways in which UNICEF, as cluster (co-) lead agency, can operationalize accountability to affected populations (AAP), implement the localization agenda and apply the humanitarian-development (HD) nexus in an emergency response, among others; it should also spark a reflection on the possible lasting changes/ implications that COVID-19 will usher for clusters and cluster lead agency responsibilities, and anticipate ways to address the challenges and harness opportunities that it may generated.

Alongside the prospective component, the evaluation will also ***summatively* assess** the progress achieved, or not achieved, by UNICEF in its CLA (and co-CLA) capacity since the 2013 CLARE, including whether or not it adapted to the reforms and changing circumstances and improved the ways it executes its role and meets cluster core functions.

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130   E.g. AAP, PSEA, localization, joint analysis, HDN, as well as the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and the revised UNICEF CCCs.

Toward this end, the ***evaluation's objective*** will be to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, connectedness and coverage of UNICEF's CLA (and co-CLA) role to date, at both the global and country levels.

The evaluation will generate **actionable recommendations** for UNICEF and will contribute to the agency's engagement in the wider humanitarian reform processes.

Evaluation scope

The **temporal scope** of the evaluation will span from 2013 (when the last CLARE was undertaken), to 2021. The evaluation will **focus on UNICEF's CLA role**, rather than the clusters more broadly, and will have both a **global and country-level focus**. While the questions that will drive the evaluation will be fine-tuned during the inception stage, the broad areas of inquiry which will determine the scope of the exercise are outlined in the section below.

The evaluation will not seek to assess impact, understood as long-term changes in the conditions of the affected population as a direct consequence of UNICEF's CLA (and co-CLA) role but, rather, will strive to examine UNICEF's *effectiveness in facilitating sectoral coordination*.

At the **global level**, assessing effectiveness will cover the global clusters' performance in consolidating policies, setting standards

and guidelines, building response capacity by training national counterparts and establishing and maintaining surge capacity and standby rosters, and when necessary, stockpiling, and providing operational support, including needs assessment, emergency preparedness, advocacy and resource mobilization. At the **country level**, this will include country-level cluster performance in enhancing the relevance and appropriateness, timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency of their corresponding sectors. At both levels, this will also entail an in-depth examination of UNICEF's performance as a partner in fulfilling its CLA (and co-CLA) role.

In scoping and designing this evaluation, synergies will be sought with **ongoing exercises** such as the evaluation of the implementation of **UNICEF's procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming** ('HD nexus') and the Office of Emergency Programmes **(EMOPS) review of UNICEF's 'top-10' humanitarian programmes.** The former was designed in 2019 to assess, inter alia, how effectively UNICEF is coordinating around the nexus with counterparts and, in doing so, will specifically explore the extent to which UNICEF uses its position as CLA to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development planning and programming. The evaluation team will therefore be required to ensure that the scope and approach of this evaluation effectively builds on such exercises, while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

Evaluation users

The main client for this evaluation will be the Deputy Executive Director for Emergencies. Other key intended users of this evaluation include the following:

- The Director of EMOPS and team;

- The global cluster coordination unit (GCCU), other EMOPS sections in Geneva and New York (e.g., humanitarian policy section, humanitarian field support section);

- Programme Division (PD);

- Other relevant divisions, such as Division of Human Resources (DHR) and Supply Division (SD); the Public Sector Alliances and Resource Mobilization Office (PARMO) and Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP) Division; and others as appropriate;

- Regional directors and regional emergency advisors;

- Representatives in COs, cluster coordinators, and other relevant colleagues in COs where UNICEF's clusters have been activated; and

- Co-lead agencies, cluster partners, and other partners (e.g., national disaster management authorities) participating in the nutrition, WASH and education clusters and the child protection area of responsibility.

- UNICEF Executive Board, other United Nations and NGO partners.

As part of the inception phase of this evaluation, a more detailed **stakeholder analysis** will be conducted to help identify priorities or possible concerns of various stakeholders. Stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation from the early stages of the evaluation process. Also, the evaluation will be made available publicly, and donors, member states, academic institutions and the public will have access to the final publication.

Guiding evaluation questions

The following evaluation questions are indicative. During the inception phase, the evaluation team will discuss with EO/EMOPS/RG members, use their insights from the desk review of UNICEF documents and propose a "definitive set" of questions. This will be further supported by the development of a theory of change of UNICEF's CLA (to be formalized it the inception report) and the definition of specific indicators which the evaluation will use as a reference to draw its findings on (to be formalized in the evaluation matrix).

Criteria	Suggested questions/sub-questions
Relevance/ Appropriateness	1. To what extent is the management of UNICEF's CLA (and co-CLA) responsibilities aligned with the principles and standards prescribed by the cluster approach? 2. To what extent is UNICEF's CLA role aligned with the coordination and response needs of field operations? 3. To what extent do affected communities and local actors participate through clusters and have decision-making power in the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance?
Effectiveness	4. To what extent and how have UNICEF-(co-)led clusters contributed to improved emergency response through greater predictability, accountability and strengthened partnership? 5. To what extent has UNICEF as CLA effectively delivered on the six core functions of the clusters it (co-)leads?[131] 6. In what ways has UNICEF fulfilled its "provider of last resort" role when identified gaps have not been addressed?
Efficiency	7. How effectively has UNICEF harnessed the resources at its disposal to fulfil its CLA (and co-CLA) responsibilities at country and global levels?[132]
Coherence/ Connectedness	8. To what extent and how has UNICEF's CLA approach been linked with other relevant initiatives and partners both within and outside the organization, including other CLA?[133] 9. How equipped is UNICEF to ensure that its CLA (and co-CLA) responsibilities will result in long-term, enduring sectoral coordination for enhanced response capacity? 10. To what extent is UNICEF using its position as a cluster lead agency to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development planning and programming?
Coverage	11. To what extent have UNICEF-led (and co-led) clusters *enhanced and maintained* quality and coverage (geographic and programmatic) of humanitarian needs?[134]

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131 **Additional related questions (selection):** To what extent has UNICEF's leadership enabled better **support to delivery** of humanitarian programming in the clusters it leads/co-lead? How relevant are the **advocacy efforts** of the global clusters in addressing/influencing policy issues related to coordination on behalf of field operations? How successful are the clusters in **monitoring** quality of services provided??

132 **Additional related questions:** To what extent can UNICEF show **value for money** for its CLA investments to date, and to what extent has it actively identified the most cost-effective means of achieving CLA management success? What **innovative approaches** have clusters identified and implemented to become more efficient, including in contexts that are under-funded?

133 **Additional related question:** To what extent has UNICEF leveraged leadership across all clusters and AoRs to deliver on global commitments including Grand Bargain (e.g centrality of protection and AAP)? How effectively does UNICEF make the connection with its CLA accountabilities in the HCT?

134 **Additional related questions:** How has UNICEF ensured centrality of protection across clusters it (co-)leads?; How has UNICEF engaged to strengthen coordination in countries/locations where there is no formal activation of the cluster system?

The evaluation will employ a **mixed-methods** approach including qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data will be triangulated to the extent possible to ensure soundness of findings. Given the **unfolding COVID-19 pandemic**, related travel risks and the significant disruption experienced by countries at large, the extent of primary data collection will have to be assessed carefully and **alternative, creative approaches to data collection** will have to be sought. Virtual data collection including online surveys and remote interviews seem pursuable and will be explored and fine-tuned during the inception phase. Along these lines, the feasibility of **country case studies** will have to be considered and discussed with EMOPS and the evaluation reference group, also considering availability of CO-level data. If deemed feasible, countries could be selected as representative cases of their specific CLA profile on a **range of criteria**, which are likely to include, among others: emergency profile (type and level), stages of CLA implementation (e.g. early activation, implementation, phasing out), number of clusters in place, number of cluster members at both the national and sub-national level, presence of a United Nations peacekeeping mission, funding available, etc). Selection will also seek to capture maximum regional diversity, while avoiding duplication (and 'evaluation fatigue') in COs that have participated in other recent EO evaluations.

The inception report will provide a complete list of data sources to use to answer each evaluation question; an initial list is included below:

Key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders. Key stakeholders will include, but will not be limited to: UNICEF staff at HQ (NY and Geneva), regional office (RO) and CO levels, cluster (co-) leads and cluster members at HQ and CO level, HC/RC at CO level, national and sub-national authorities donors, and the voices of directly affected populations (to the extent possible).

Structured document review of key documents — such as strategic policy documents related to the CLA, plans, project proposals, reports, meeting materials, lessons learned, and previous UNICEF-led and interagency evaluative exercises, at both global and country level in pursuit of specific data points or facts.

Comparative/benchmarking analysis, exploring what **clusters (co-)led by other organizations** have done differently in the past few years to enhance their CLA responsibilities and what **other organizations** have done in undertaking coordination effectively in complex settings that might inform how UNICEF exercises its CLA role. This comparative/benchmarking analysis will be framed in such a way as to account for a variety of future scenarios as they related to UNICEF's latitude for change.

Norms and standards

The guidance documents mentioned below are those that the evaluation team is expected to comply with:

- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System 2016[135] (including impartiality, independence, quality, transparency, consultative process)

- Ethical Guidelines for United Nations Evaluations will guide the overall process[136]

- UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis[137]

- The evaluation should incorporate the human rights-based approaches and gender perspectives

Evaluation management

The evaluation will be managed by the **UNICEF Evaluation Office**. The Evaluation Office will be advised by a **reference group** comprising UNICEF staff from various divisions and offices in the organization (EMOPS, GCCU, PD, SD, DPAM, 1-2 REAs, and at least two CO cluster coordinators). Please see the ToR for the reference group for specific roles and responsibilities of the group.

Team composition and required qualifications

The evaluation will be conducted by an external evaluation team of consultants. The external consultants will consist of one team leader and two consultants; national consultants to help research and data collection at the country level may be recruited as well, as needed.

The consultants will commit to working on this review as a team from June 2020 to November 2020. The three consultants will work closely with UNICEF evaluation staff and the team will be responsible for designing the evaluation, undertaking the data collection and analysis, conducting the debriefing sessions and recommendations workshop, as well as preparing the evaluation deliverables and reports.

Required qualifications of external consultants

- extensive experience in emergency response and managing complex situations

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135 UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016. Available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914

136 UNEG Ethical Guidelines, 2008. Available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102

137 UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis

- extensive experience researching resilience, humanitarian action, trends in the international aid community

- extensive experience and knowledge of IASC and cluster coordination work

- knowledge of latest methods and approaches in evaluation, especially participatory methods and accountability to affected populations

- familiarity with UNICEF's emergency responses

- excellent oral and written communication skills

- knowledge of qualitative and quantitative methods

- experience with the ethics of evidence

- generation; experience collecting data from vulnerable groups; familiarity with ethical safeguards

- *For the position of team leader,* experience in managing a team

Timeframe, tasks and deliverables

This evaluation will be undertaken from June 2020, with a final report expected by end of November 2020. The table below provides an overview of the tentative timeframe and key deliverables.

Task/Deliverable	Dates	Responsible party
Draft terms of reference and scoping	End Jan 2020	Evaluation Office + GCCU
Terms of reference discussion	March-April 2020	Evaluation Office + Reference group
Final terms of reference	March-April 2020	Evaluation Office + Reference group
Initial interviews and consultations, and drafting of inception report	May-June 2020	Evaluation team
Review inception report + its finalization	15 June 2020	Evaluation Office + Reference group
Data collection missions to Geneva, ROs, COs	June - September 2020	Evaluation team
Draft report	15 October 2020	Evaluation team
Recommendations workshop	October 2020	All
Review draft report	November 2010	Evaluation Office + Reference group
Final Report	30 November 2020	Evaluation team

Annex I: The current and updated Protocols

1. Protocol 1. Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation: Definition and Procedures [replacing Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Activation: definition and procedures]

2. Protocol 2. 'empowered Leadership' in a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation [replacing Concept Paper on 'Empowered Leadership'- revised March 2014]

3. Responding to Level 3 Emergencies: What 'Empowered Leadership' looks like in practice (note this protocol is under revision)

4. Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level (revised July 2015)

5. Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module Version 2.0 (July 2015)

6. Accountability to Affected Populations Operational Framework

7. Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM) Concept Note (December 2013. Note this protocol is under revision)

8. Common Framework for Preparedness (October 2013)

9. Emergency Response Preparedness (draft for Field Testing, July 2015)

10. Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment Guidance (Revision July 2015)

Annex II: Evaluations undertaken for Clusters:

Cluster/Evaluation	Agency/Year
Evaluation of UNICEF'S Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action, 2013	UNICEF, 2013
Evaluation of UNHCR's Leadership of the Global Protection Cluster and Field Protection Clusters: 2014-2016	UNHCR, 2017
Evaluation of the Global Cluster for Early Recovery,	UNDP, 2018

Annex III: Key Findings from UNICEF Evaluations (2017 – 2019)

Key findings/extracts related to clusters/cluster system from a sample of (12) UNICEF evaluations conducted between 2017-2019 and commissioned from the following offices: EO, SoP, Mali, Bangladesh, EAPRO, WCARO	
Strength	**Weakness/Areas for improement (including collective ones, not only UNICEF-specific)**
• **UNICEF's leadership at the country level considered broadly effective** - UNICEF found to have fulfilled its role for cluster/pillar coordination as far as feasible in the Typhoon Haiyan, Central African Republic and Mali crises, with its **commitment to recruit long-term staff for coordination praised** (a) • UNICEF provided **consistently strong cluster leadership in WASH**, and ensured coherence with the work of its partners….The UNICEF-led WASH cluster also **stood out positively in the Horn of Africa drought response in 2011… WASH teams** are generally considered to be **legitimate, proactive and effective cluster leaders, maintaining strong links** with and between cluster members and partners. (b) • **UNICEF WASH** played a positive role in joint leadership and **in the transition from cluster to national coordination**. Both are important factors to supporting and maintaining government ownership and capacity in humanitarian response... (b) • According to stakeholders, **UNICEF plays a crucial role in coordinating nutrition components within a global framework, conceptualizing stunting reduction programmes, and providing leadership as part of the Nutrition cluster** - NGOs also indicated that UNICEF shows leadership in the cluster coordination meetings, and **shares findings about the nutritional data**, both national and regional, as well as the evolution of the IYCF strategy and its implementation (c) • Cluster/working group members indicated **satisfaction with UNICEF's coordination role (d)** • One of UNICEF's added values to the sector is its coordination efforts and **ability to allocate resources to management of clusters, working groups and partnership arrangements** - in the response to the Gaza conflict, UNICEF boosted its cluster coordination role in all sections, and **was able to provide surge support to be allocated specifically to WASH cluster coordination**... (d)	• **Shortcomings** in the wider United Nations coordination of emergency responses, including within the cluster system, have been widely documented… **The wider cluster system's comparatively siloed approach impedes cross-sectoral links** (a) • In the Ebola crisis, **UNICEF lacked the relationships and technical skills to fulfil its lead coordination role** (a) • In the Philippines, **coordination lost momentum**, dissipating once the original coordinating teams left the country (a) • **Unclear role of regional offices** and regional emergency advisers in the **cluster system** (a) • **Lack of knowledge management** systems impeded the absorption of learning produced (a) • Cluster/working group members **were not as satisfied with the cluster system and its ability to contribute to effective and efficient responses to crises, and eliminate gaps and overlaps** (d) • Coordination of actors around clusters suffers sometimes from **lack of direct benefits for participants** - *Evaluation Recommendation:* **Revise the level and modality of engagement of cluster members to ensure good functioning at central and decentralized levels** (e) • **Overall coordination of the 2017 response in Yemen appeared confused, with multiple mechanisms overlapping and running in parallel.** In particular, the respective roles of the clusters (health/WASH) and of the Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs) were poorly defined (f) • *Evaluation Recommendation:* **Clarification of coordination processes**. Cholera-related coordination processes and the respective roles …. **should be clarified and simplified**... providing the necessary WASH services across the entire country was too big a task even for UNICEF as WASH cluster lead and (in theory) provider of last resort... (f)

Key findings/extracts related to clusters/cluster system from a sample of (12) UNICEF evaluations conducted between 2017-2019 and commissioned from the following offices: EO, SoP, Mali, Bangladesh, EAPRO, WCARO	
Strength	**Weakness/Areas for improement** (including collective ones, not only UNICEF-specific)

• <u>Inter-sector coordination</u> **(between the clusters) was reported to be relatively strong in Yemen - the working relationship between the health and <u>WASH clusters</u>, in particular, was good,** and they worked closely together to produce the integrated response plan around which the response was largely built... (f)	• **There were challenges/ concern over the <u>veracity of cluster assessment data and coverage figures</u>** (South Sudan, Typhoon Haiyan); the **<u>adequacy of cluster monitoring systems</u>** (Central African Republic, South Sudan Typhoon Haiyan); and **<u>information management and gathering and sharing data</u>** on needs, locations and agencies (Central African Republic, South Sudan) … *Evaluation Recommendation:* **UNICEF, and the clusters it leads, should calculate targets based on an assessment of people in need.** UNICEF should use its role as Cluster Lead Agency to **advocate to the IASC for the consistent measurement of coverage as a proportion of people in need to be adopted across clusters**.... Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported.... (h)
• UNICEF's position **enabled a high or very high level of collaboration and coordination, not only with line ministries but also with the other sector stakeholders – donors and NGOs** – attending these meetings... (g)	
• UNICEF has **used its role as Cluster Lead Agency to strengthen the coverage and quality of the response** of other agencies to complex humanitarian emergencies... (h)	
• After Typhoon Damrey in 2017, UNICEF Philippines **supported education officials in gaining capacity to apply emergency needs assessment tools, enhanced coordination and leveraged partnerships** through the Coordination Mechanism and Education Cluster system in which UNICEF is the co-lead agency (j)	• There has been a general tendency among UNICEF staff to **overestimate the coverage of their interventions in all sectors**, to the detriment … **of a more efficient coordination at the sector/cluster level, especially in terms of filling out the "Who Does What Where" matrix (3Ws) or the "Who is Where Doing What" matrix (4Ws)..** (i)
• **The role of the <u>Education</u> Cluster** in increasing coordination and collaboration among the different stakeholders involved in DRR in EDU has **resulted in better preparedness and response to crisis**(j)	
• **UNICEF's role in the <u>Nutrition</u> cluster** (of enhancing country level capacities to respond to nutrition needs in emergency settings) and the use of community based **programmes is appropriate and adequate to address the needs of beneficiaries,** specifically in the emergency context. (k)	• *Evaluation Recommendation:* **<u>Strengthen the coordination and communication skills</u> of UNICEF staff leading the Cluster and Sectoral Working Groups, especially at the FO level.** This would include the provision of basis and intermediate training and skills/building workshops on such topics as effective communication, coordination, joint planning and use of monitoring data for decision-making (i)
• **Effective leadership (in Nutrition)** has been provided through the cluster mechanism and **UNICEF has played a critical role in providing the core pipeline of commodities required for treatment of SAM.** (l)	
• There is an overall consensus …**that the Education Cluster, with UNICEF as co-leader, is an effective advocate for education in humanitarian and emergency situations, promoting prevention and preparedness in the Education Sector**. Government leadership in the cluster system is important to promote accountability and ownership.....**UNICEF engagement in global and regional partnerships for DRR in EDU and in the clusters has contributed to efficiency in terms of agreement on methods and models and joint advocacy** (l)	• **A greater focus on <u>preventive interventions (on Nutrition)</u> will be more appropriate to strengthen responsiveness towards addressing the need for climate-change resiliency** (k)

List of UNICEF evaluations consulted:

a) TOWARDS IMPROVED EMERGENCY RESPONSES: Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 – 2016 (2017) (a)

b) Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of WASH in Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016 (2017) (b)

c) REDUCING STUNTING IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE: A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE (2017) ©

d) State of Palestine: Evaluation for Humanitarian Action for Children (2017) (d)

e) Evaluation de la Réponse Humanitaire de l'UNICEF à la Crise Malienne 2013-2017 (2018) (e)

f) Evaluation of the Level 3 Response to the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen: A Crisis within a Crisis (2018) (f)

g) Global Evaluation of UNICEF's Drinking Water Supply Programming in Rural Areas and Small Towns, 2006–2016 (2018) (g)

h) Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (2018) (h)

i) Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Lake Chad Basin Crisis in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria (2018) (i)

j) Evaluation of UNICEF's Disaster Risk Reduction Programming in Education in East Asia and the Pacific (2018) (j)

k) Joint UNICEF- GoB Nutrition Programme Evaluation 2017-2020 (2018) (k)

l) Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan – Part 1: (Child Survival - WASH, Health, Nutrition and related issues) (2018) (l)

ANNEX 4 — CLARE I RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLARE II PERSPECTIVE

CLARE I RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLARE II PERSPECTIVE		
CLARE I	**RELEVANCE AND PROGRESS**	**CLARE II PERSPECTIVE**
Recommendation 1: External[138] **Coordinator Performance** Develop a "cluster-ready" initiative to increase country office preparedness for cluster activation in high-risk countries.	This recommendation points to the need for UNICEF to strengthen its humanitarian role and capacity in country offic-es. This recommendation appears to have been absorbed by the overall 2020 UNICEF humanitarian review, which looks at the achievements and especially sets ambitions in terms of UNICEF's humanitarian focus and capacity. The recommenda-tion looks (too) limited in comparison to the issues it has identified. Moreover, as most humanitarian contexts have clusters in 2021, the issue currently is more a question of cluster deactivation or the transition to development coordi-nation as part of the HD nexus.	CLARE II sees the issue of country offices' understanding and preparedness on the clusters as one that relates to humanitarian experience in country offices, especially in senior positions, and engagement of the country office with the clusters. Practices have remained inconsistent as they differ from country to country and cluster.

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138   We find the term "external coordination" confusing. The issue and recommendation as framed cover UNICEF's internal capacity and performance.

CLARE I	CLARE I RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLARE II PERSPECTIVE	
	RELEVANCE AND PROGRESS	**CLARE II PERSPECTIVE**
Recommendation 2: Internal Cluster Lead Agency Performance Strengthen UNICEF-wide management systems to support the CLA role, including strengthening the role of regional offices and better connecting country representatives to a global CLA strategic management structure.	This recommendation remains relevant. Many of the issues identified have come up in CLARE II.	UNICEF's institutional approach and attitude remains focused on its individual agency performance. It sees coordination as an activity that helps the agency to de-liver, instead of having adopted the perspective that its performance contributes to a higher goal: optimal col-lective performance for common goals. Internal accountability for cluster performance in the management lines of country representatives, regional directors, and the executive director is weak.
Recommendation 3: Human Resources Performance Develop an integrated strategy for human resources surge capacity and UNICEF coordination staff development.	This recommendation remains relevant. Many of the issues identified have come up in CLARE II. UNICEF's humanitarian review devotes extensive attention to strengthening its human resources capacity to deliver on UNICEF's humanitarian mandate.	Standby partners are still used to fill gaps in key cluster leadership positions. Instead, the question that needs to be addressed is why these gaps occur. The answer may point to finding a sustainable solution for cluster positions. In addition, cluster leadership positions should be part of a career trajectory.

CLARE I RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLARE II PERSPECTIVE		
CLARE I	**RELEVANCE AND PROGRESS**	**CLARE II PERSPECTIVE**
Recommendation 4: Scope and Boundary Issues Increase coherence (interpretation and articulation) and then fidelity (understanding and consistent application) through UNICEF CLA policy and practice.	CLARE I made this recommendation in the context of the implementation of the 2012 IASC transformative agenda. A decade later, the humanitarian programme cycle is one of the few outcomes of this agenda that has been retained. Coherence and fidelity issues in UNICEF (to use CLARE I terminology) on cluster guidance are among the top-line findings of CLARE II.	UNICEF has not sufficiently used its IASC membership to share its significant CLA experiences and to draw lessons in terms of the need for updating various cluster guidance materials, including around the balance between coordination and leadership as part of the CLA role; co-leadership; or the provider of last resort, to mention a few examples.
Recommendation 5: Cost effectiveness Mitigate the use of clusters in inappropriate scenarios by developing models and tools for non-cluster coordination, including transition points for country offices, and establish clarity on the role of clusters, if any, for national capacity-building to ensure efficient and fit-for-purpose coordination approaches	The recommendation appears to assume that by limiting or and/transitioning the clusters to other coordination models, coordination costs or investments will be reduced. That as-sumption remains untested as far as we know. No one as far we know has even attempted to assess the coordination costs of the cluster approach as compared to other coordination models.	Co-leadership of clusters has been pointed at as very expensive in terms of transaction costs. New models of humanitarian coordination, such as area-based coordination, have been suggested, or are implemented especially in settings of mixed migration largely because the cluster approach has been seen as not fitting (new) contexts.

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