

Recommended good practices for the minimum structure of coordination teams at country level

for UNICEF as a Cluster Lead Agency

Purpose

The main purpose of this document is to support UNICEF as a Cluster Lead Agency in meeting cluster accountabilities. As adequate staffing of a cluster/Area of Responsibility (AoR)/sector is one of UNICEF's core accountabilities, this document provides recommended practices for minimum structure of the cluster/AoR/sector coordination teams at national and sub-national levels to ensure that their functions are effectively fulfilled and maintained, and, ultimately, to ensure a more timely and relevant humanitarian response.

Staffing for the cluster/AoR/sector coordination teams can be adjusted if the national government is taking a leadership role in coordinating the cluster/AoR/sector response, and ensures that dedicated coordination staff are recruited. In this case, UNICEF is required to support government capacities by addressing human resource gaps through capacity development.



Structure of the coordination teams

The Decision Tree (see below) only focuses on the minimum cluster/AoR/sector structure for the coordination and information management functions. However, depending on the variations in context and complexity, different structures and functions may be required such as Deputy Coordinators, Co-Coordination, Assessment Specialists, Cluster Support Officers, Analysts, Communication Specialists, or other staff to cover some of the cluster functions. It is recommended to use this document to inform the minimum structure of the coordination teams. In case of doubt as to whether this applies to a specific context, contact respective Global Clusters /AoRs for additional information and they will also be able to provide you with support and individual guidance on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to the Decision Tree, country offices should take into account the following elements when considering the contract level and composition of the cluster teams: complexity of the crisis (mixed natural disaster and man-made crisis, overlap of different types of humanitarian issues such as food insecurity, epidemics and violence); size of the humanitarian caseload (number of displaced people and people affected); number of organizations taking part in the response; interaction needed with development actors; hindrance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints; number of national authorities; level of advocacy and interaction needed with national authorities. The staff contract level should be related to the complexity of the emergency situation and the level of interaction required with the national authorities.

Gender and Gender Based Violence (GBV) technical expert at national level. Based on the Inter-Agency Humanitarian evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls [Management Response Plan](#), it is recommended to recruit a dedicated gender/GBV technical expert of at least P4 level to work with all UNICEF-led clusters/AoR to mainstream gender and GBV into Clusters/AoR's work, especially in L3 emergencies, complex emergencies and in a protection crisis.

Reporting lines

Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinators at national level. It is recommended that Coordinators do not report to the respective programme staff (i.e., Chiefs of Section), so as to ensure the impartiality and neutrality of the cluster coordination role. The recommended reporting line is to the Representative/Head of Office as their role is to represent UNICEF as a Cluster Lead Agency in the Humanitarian Country Team and they are ultimately accountable for effective cluster leadership. In recognition of the potential for a high number of direct reports to these posts, alternative reporting lines might be considered in some situations, and the Representatives/Head of the Offices may delegate these responsibilities to the Deputy Representative/Deputy Head of Office, Chief of Field Operations, Chief of Emergencies, or similar.

Information Management Officers/Specialists (IMOs) at national level. It is recommended that Information Management Officers/Specialists report directly to the respective Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinators, and with a dotted line, including technical accountability, to other internal mechanisms.

Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinators at sub-national level. It is recommended that Coordinators do not report to the respective programme staff (i.e., programme specialists), to ensure their impartiality and neutrality. It is recommended for sub-national Coordinators to report to the Chiefs of Field Offices, and with a dotted line, including technical accountability, to the national Cluster /AoR/Sector Coordinator or vice versa.

Information Management Officers/Specialists at sub-national level. It is recommended for the IMOs at the sub-national level to report to the respective sub-national Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinators.

Required experience

The required experience, represented as contract levels in the Decision Tree, is suitable for the UN grading system. For a non-UN Cluster Lead Agency, a comparative scale should be used, noting that: P5 posts require a minimum of 10 years' relevant experience; P4 posts require a minimum of seven years' relevant experience; P3/NOC posts require a minimum of five years' relevant experience; and P2/NOB



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posts require a minimum of two years' relevant experience. It is recognized that Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinators at P5 level do not usually have large budgetary responsibilities, as in the case of P5 Chiefs of Section. However, their overall contribution to the response is strongly strategic in nature as they should lead high-level advocacy aimed at donors, UN Agencies and government entities, and be able to coordinate complex programming, multi-partner engagement, including representation at the Humanitarian Country Team and other responsibilities requiring advanced competencies and experience. The position is highly visible and carries high potential for reputational risk for UNICEF.

Compatibility of contract levels between programme and coordination staff. The level of a national Cluster/AoR/Sector Coordinator should not be lower than the level of the respective Chief of Section. The level of a sub-national Cluster Coordinator should not be lower than the highest level of the respective programme specialist in the same sub-national office

Contract types

Depending on the total (expected) duration of the emergency, the Decision Tree below provides information on the selection of contract types, namely fixed term (or permanent) versus temporary appointment contracts. Other types of appointments are not recommended.

The use of consultants and external surge mechanisms for core coordination and information management functions, including stand-by partnership arrangements, is only appropriate in the first 90 days of the IASC Cluster/AoR activation while UNICEF creates and recruits staff positions, as these posts have high visibility and a high potential for reputational risk for UNICEF. The use of an external surge mechanism may require clear delegation of cluster/AoR representation roles to the coordinators' line managers (non-programme staff).

The use of the external surge mechanism should be considered second to **internal surge mechanisms** of country offices (double-hatting or temporary reallocation of staff to coordination roles) or of UNICEF staff (i.e., stretch assignments, internal surge mechanisms, regional and HQ deployments). **Double-hatting** as coordination and programme staff should only be considered in the first 90 days of sudden-onset crises, as this affects effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the demanding role of coordination, and to enable the cluster to fulfill its core functions, and to design and implement an agency programme. Double-hatting may also undermine the neutrality of cluster/AoR/sector leadership, and hence credibility and trust by cluster members. Double-hatting across sectors (for example, an IMO working for more than one cluster) is discouraged as this work requires specific sectoral competencies.

Role of Regional Offices in recruitment

Where applicable, it is the responsibility of Regional Offices to support Country Offices in the recruitment of appropriate human resources for coordination positions. In line with their oversight function, Regional Offices should be informed by a Country Office Representative/Head of Office or the post's line manager of any changes in the coordination team structure, gaps in human resources, ongoing recruitment processes, and once the posts are recruited. Regional Offices should provide support in the following areas:

- Ensure Country Offices are familiar with this document;
- Review the Human Resource plans of Country Offices in their regions, including plans developed as part of the Programme Budget Review submission or alternative processes, and propose modifications to ensure that coordination teams' contract levels and types are in line with this current document;
- Identify suitable candidates and distribute recruitment advertisements through their networks in the region;
- Participate in the recruitment process for international positions as a member of the review panel and provide final approval; and
- Act as the first point of contact for human resources-related questions from the country offices on posts for coordination teams and ensure that Global Clusters are consulted on the recruitment of coordination teams, as per this document.
- Provide recommendations on the appropriate structure of coordination teams at national and sub-national levels;
- Disseminate recruitment advertisements on their website and through their networks;
- Provide recruitment tools and guidance for coordination and information management;
- Review the final selection of candidates and provide advice on their suitability, where appropriate;
- Support the interview process, where appropriate, (for example, the establishment of new posts, system-wide emergencies, etc.) and in coordination with Regional Offices;
- Provide orientation to newly recruited Coordinators or IMOs at a national level; and
- Provide ongoing training on coordination, information management and other functions to strengthen the existing capacity of coordination team members.

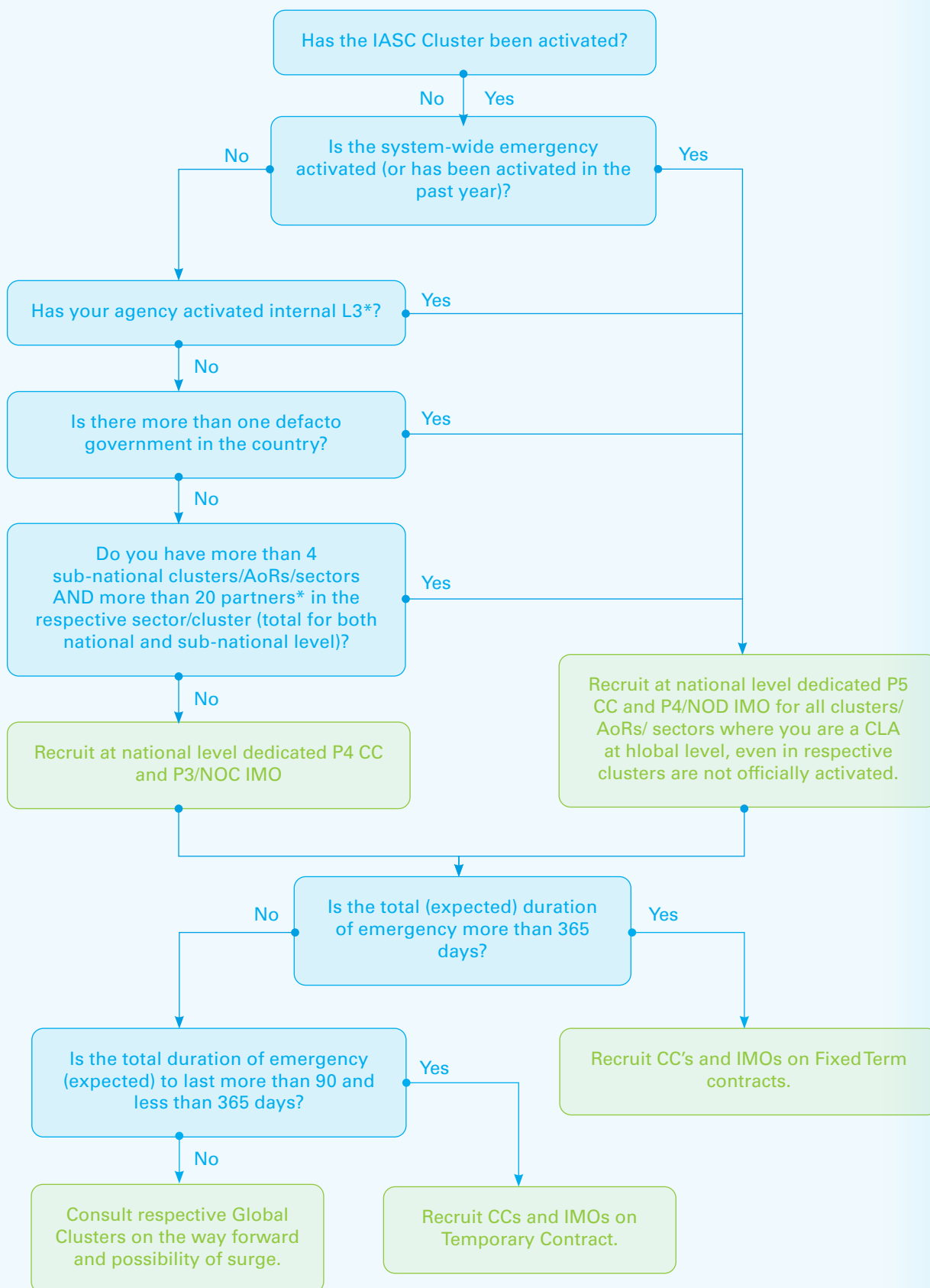
Implementation of recommended good practices

To fill the gap between the current situation and recommended minimal standards in L2 and L3 emergencies, UNICEF has committed to prioritize investment in core coordination roles in existing funding streams, including a dedicated 1% of the Humanitarian Appeal for Children for coordination and use of the Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund and Country Offices' fundraising strategies to invest in coordination, in adherence to UNICEF's corporate prioritization and accountability processes.

Role of the Global Clusters/AoRs in recruitment

It is the responsibility of the Representative/Head of Office to ensure appropriate human resources are recruited to fulfill Cluster Lead Agency accountabilities. The Global Clusters/AoRs should be informed by the country office Representative/Head of Office or the post's line manager of any changes in the coordination team structure, gaps in human resources, ongoing recruitment processes, and once the posts are recruited. Global Clusters/AoRs may provide support, if required, in the following areas:

Decision tree on the selection of the minimum composition of cluster/sector/AoR coordination team at the national level



CC - Cluster/Sector/AoR Coordinator
 IMO - Information Management Officer / Specialist
 IASC - Inter Agency Standing Committee

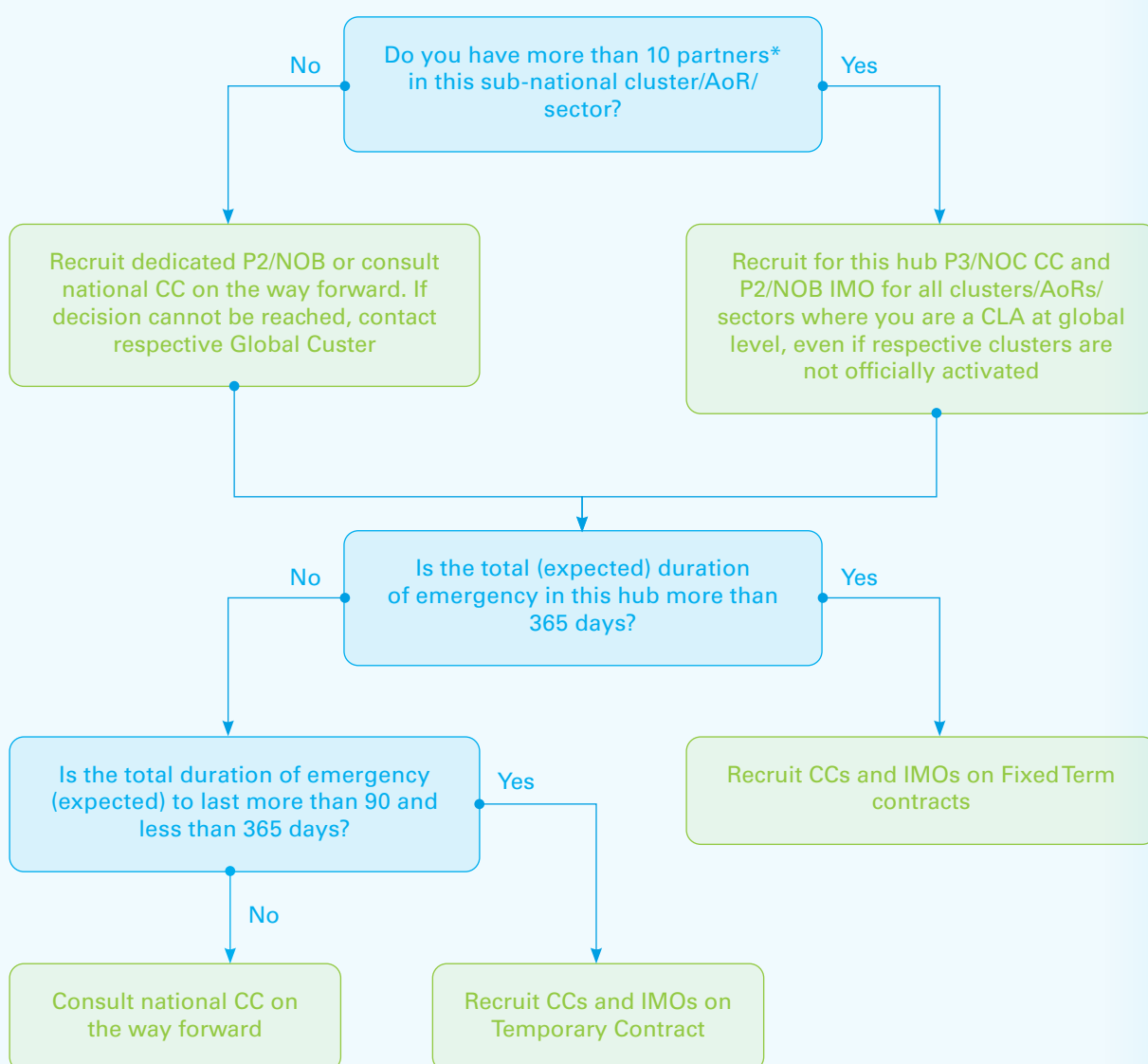
**Partner – is an agency currently implementing activities in the sectoral/AoR/ cluster workplan. The figure should correspond to the number of partners on the respective cluster pages in the latest Humanitarian Response Plan.

* For L2 emergencies contact respective Global Clusters / AoRs for guidance specific to your context



Decision tree on the selection of the minimum composition of cluster/sector/AoR coordination team at the sub-national level (use for each hub separately).

This decision tree is applicable if clusters/AoRs/sectors are operational at the national level and sub-national clusters/AoRs/sectors report to them. If the sub-national coordination mechanism does not report to the national one (e.g., North Eastern Nigeria, Cox’s Bazar), the decision for them should be made using the national decision tree.





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পরিষ্কার
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