

Following the ongoing coordination architecture review initiated by UN OCHA, Clusters were asked to identify, assess and review the capacities of potential national counterparts in the event of transferring coordination responsibilities and to provide recommendations on the way forward.

From the ESNFI perspective (as well as from the overall coordination scheme) **there has been limited Governmental participation in the meetings, discussions and planning of humanitarian assistance**. It's understood that these were side effects of the complicated election period and delay in forming the Unity Government. For example, due to the lack of political agreement on the composition of Cabinet and the inaction of most of its subordinated bodies, commissions and Ministerial structures the coordination channels with UN Agencies and humanitarian actors were visibly affected, (i.e. identified counterparts and already trained Government Staff were removed from posts, decisions delayed, programs on hold).

The recent active and inquisitive approach taken by the President's Office and the Office of the First lady has put pressure on Cluster partners to share available stocks, operational capacity and implementation modalities without receiving feedback or information on the GIRoA's capacity to support emergency response. As a result, there is still **no clear understanding on who the primary Government focal points** are for each emergency circumstance, as there is overlap between provincial coordination mechanisms, task forces and commissions with similar compositions and different mandates/TORs. At the moment the most active Government coordination body for emergency response at National level is National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC) led by CEO that calls for meetings on Ad Hoc basis and the National Security Council meeting on emergency which has weekly meetings (every Tuesday) led by the especial representative of the president (Wais Barmak).

It should also be noted that **not only at the cluster level but at the inter-cluster coordination mechanism, there is no proper representation of the GIRoA**. This could be the effect of the adaptation phase after the withdrawal of international military forces where humanitarian assistance was coordinated among international actors with limited presence of the GIRoA. In this regard, the value and *raison d'être* of the cluster scheme should be analyzed taking into consideration the political and security transition in Afghanistan, the GIRoA institutional capacities, commitments and the opinions of the main stakeholders.

A first phase of discussion has been undertaken by the ESNFI and Protection clusters and the Refugee and Returnee chapter to understand how the eventual transfer of responsibilities could occur and who would be the potential Government counterparts. After this initial debate, **the conclusion was that in the event of phasing out of the ESNFI the coordination responsibilities would split** between NFIs and shelter. Following this logic, NFIs coordination could be merged with WASH (as most of current NFIs assistance includes hygiene elements) or handed over to ANDMA . This would also include emergency shelter assistance. On the other hand, transitional and more durable shelter assistance could be coordinated by the MoRD / MoRR / MOP (depending if the beneficiaries are in rural areas, are refugees/returnees or if it's part of national housing plan). It's important to highlight that ESNFI Cluster is not engaged in development interventions. Thus, emergency interventions cannot be handed over to a development partner.

The above analysis envisages only the national perspective. At the Provincial level, the overall executive responsibility rests with the Governor and the coordination is managed by PDMCs. Thus, to ensure effective coordination and field implementation, there should be either a National policy or strategy to replicate the same coordination bodies or the designation of thematic focal points with delegated coordination responsibilities. As a result, it is recommended that the humanitarian community waits until the GoIRA identifies counterparts and a coordination scheme before investing in capacity building or further developing stronger coordination partnerships. This was the unanimous opinion of all Cluster partners in the last meeting (17/05/2015).

There are no formal co-leadership agreements with National Authorities. It has been noted by Cluster Partners that the Government should be the appointing corresponding counterparts to relevant clusters. At the Provincial level, the PDCM, ANDMA Representatives and the Governor's offices step in to emergency situations on an Ad-Hoc basis. **It's noted the absence of Government's intervention protocols to harmonize and rationalize relief operations**.

Currently there is no adequate participation of the Government in the National or Regional ESNFI Cluster coordination and planning mechanisms. **Two main reasons for the lack of integration include 1) the unclear roles and responsibilities among Government structures and 2) the lack of knowledge/capacity to handle complex emergencies and coordination schemes.** Other factors as corruption, limited Government executive power in rural areas, insecurity, organized crime and ethnical/political divisions further limit the participation.

On the delineation of a future roadmap to prepare the possible handover of coordination responsibilities, **the HC supported by HCT should start high level discussions with the GIRoA to identify the corresponding Government institutions, organizations and agencies that will be the designated focal points.** This will include the preparation of phased handover and the assurances that the UN will continue providing technical support when needed. It's important to note that any coordination structure to be developed will need a dedicated budget allocation and adequate means to fulfill its commitment. It's perceived that the GIRoA would not have additional funds to cover new operational responsibilities.

Regarding the available capacity to handle complex emergencies and coordination schemes or to undertake the primary cluster's responsibilities, it's noted that after many years of humanitarian presence, provision of trainings, workshops, coaching and sponsoring Government institutions and officials, **there is limited active Government coordination and operational capacity.** This is because of the high rotation of. Unfortunately, **there is neither adequate mapping on the extent and dimension of capacity building done in the past decade** nor a formal registry of trained Officials or Staff. Therefore, at the same time of identifying the potential coordination counterparts, it is necessary to accurately map the capacities built (data on name, type of training, objectives, capacities developed, etc). It's only after collecting the above information that a capacity building plan can be developed. For example some Officials sent on a week training to Rome with little previous knowledge of the subject may not bring much contribution to the coordination scheme although the high investment done. Besides, we have witnessed the high turnover of well-trained Officials that force many Organizations to re-invest in new trainings.

As a pre-requisite for future inclusion in CB activities, the GIRoA should commit to keep the trained Officials in their posts for a substantial period of time that will justify the training investment. Besides, the CB plan should be discussed with key donors to secure funds for trainings and eventually financially supporting new coordination positions. In parallel, basic humanitarian and coordination trainings could be provided using the current cluster structures (providing additional funds) to prepare the ground for more specific technical trainings. This could be already launched in a coordinated way by all clusters (i.e. on the second half of 2015) to prepare the ground for an eventual more compromised engagement of the GIRoA.

In sum, the major constrains impeding a possible handover to a Government counterpart are:

- Lack of GIRoA definition/appointment of the relevant counterpart to take over and its functional framework (regulations/SOPs)
- Lack of funds to pay for dedicated coordination positions
- Lack of Government's coordination knowledge, experience and capacity to handle emergencies
- Lack of funds to support Capacity Building and trainings necessary to prepare Officials with new coordination responsibilities
- Absence of already provided CB mapping, database or registry
- Blurry coordination schemes at the Provincial level and/or mixed political agendas
- Overlaps of cluster and task force's coordination schemes and field implementation

The possible steps ahead to a potential handover of the ESNFIs coordination responsibilities are:

- HC & HCT discuss and agree with the GIRoA the corresponding Government coordination counterpart
- Cluster mapping on previous CB activity and development of database
- ICCT preparing basic humanitarian and coordination curriculum
- Key donors providing funds for CB activities & relevant trainings
- Each Cluster providing coordinated CB trainings on basic humanitarian and coordination schemes
- ESNFI analyzing Technical CB needs, preparing curricula and developing training plans
- Key donors providing funds for key Government's coordination posts
- ESNFI Coordinator continue providing technical support and coaching to designated Government counterpart