

Key messages

- Coordinated health action saves lives.
- Health Clusters exist to relieve suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies, while advancing the well-being and dignity of affected populations.
- We know what makes a Health Cluster most effective.
- The Global Health Cluster exists to support Country Health Clusters.

Key messages with proof points

Coordinated health action saves lives.

- When emergencies occur, coordination is necessary. No one organization can respond to a health crisis alone.
- Health Clusters are harnessing the power of partnerships for more effective humanitarian health action.
 - A Health Cluster typically brings together a diverse set of national and international partners to work in a coordinated way to more effectively, predictably and efficiently deliver health services to people in need during an emergency.
- Good coordination means we can leverage the particular strengths of each individual agency, share resources, avoid duplication, close gaps and reach more people with life-saving health services.
- There are 48 Health Cluster partners at the global level and more than 300 partners in countries. These partners include international organizations and UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations, national authorities, affected communities, academic and training institutes and donor agencies.
- Each partner is valued and has a role to play in the Health Cluster.
 - Partners can benefit from and contribute to shared knowledge and expertise; capacity building; availability of surge personnel; access to a wider network; improved visibility; and stronger advocacy.
- The cluster approach was developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as part of the humanitarian reform in 2005, to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian response by building partnerships.
 - Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action (e.g. water, health and logistics) with clear responsibilities for coordination.

Health Clusters exist to relieve suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies, while advancing the well-being and dignity of affected populations.

- Currently 23 countries have an active Health Cluster. These Health Clusters are working to meet the health needs of approximately 70.7 million people worldwide.
 - For example, in Somalia, the Health Cluster coordinated 82 partners and, as a result, 2.5 million beneficiaries were reached with basic health services in 2014.
- As the Health Cluster lead agency, WHO supports governments to coordinate the health response to humanitarian emergencies.
- Health Cluster Coordinators are responsible for facilitating and coordinating the engagement of health partners in countries to deliver quality programmes and services to the affected population.
- Health Clusters:
 - Support the delivery of health services
 - Inform the decision-making of the humanitarian coordinator
 - Come together to develop joint plans and strategies
 - Monitor and evaluate performance
 - Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning
 - Advocate on behalf of cluster participants and the affected population to address identified concerns and ensure the prioritization of health as part of the emergency response

We know what makes a Health Cluster most effective.

- Health Clusters are strongest when they focus on strategy setting, joint planning and decision-making.
 - The joint planning process should include common objectives and deliverables; roles and responsibilities; the clarification of funding requirements; and mechanisms for transparency and accountability.
- Good coordination strives for a needs-based, rather than capacity-driven, response.
- The involvement of the affected population and local NGOs is crucial, as they are often the first responders and they are the ones who know the most appropriate solutions to their problems.
- Strong Health Clusters speak with one voice on issues of common concern, including those affecting groups who are not normally heard.
- The most effective Health Clusters work in collaboration with other related clusters including water and sanitation, protection and food security.
- In order to be effective, Health Clusters also need political and financial support from the global community.

The Global Health Cluster exists to support Country Health Clusters.

- The Global Health Cluster is a platform for organizations to work in partnership to ensure collective action results in more timely, effective and predictable response to health emergencies. WHO is the Cluster Lead Agency.
- The Global Health Cluster can make a difference by:
 - providing the right expertise at the right place at the right time;
 - building the capacity of Health Cluster Coordinators in countries;
 - gathering and disseminating sound and relevant information to guide partners' response;
 - identifying and addressing gaps in technical knowledge and available guidance to ensure the health response follows global best practices and standards; and,
 - promoting and advocating for the importance of humanitarian health action on the global stage, to help ensure that health clusters receive the political and financial support they need.
- Effective emergency response demands strong leadership from WHO.
 - WHO takes its leadership of the Global Health Cluster seriously. A dedicated unit was established at WHO's headquarters in Geneva in September 2014; 24 Health Cluster Coordinator positions were advertised as core staff positions.
 - WHO, as a member of the UN family, can help facilitate linkages with other UN agencies, including other cluster leads.

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