

Logistics Cluster

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Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed the cluster approach in 2005 and designated global cluster leads to support the humanitarian community and national authorities for the coordination and delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to communities in crisis.

With this cluster approach initiative, the World Food Programme (WFP) was designated as the global lead of the Logistics Cluster. In most cases, WFP will also be the lead of the Logistics Cluster at field level. However, under exceptional circumstances where WFP is unable to fulfil this role at field level, for example where WFP might not be present in country, another organisation can be appointed as lead of the country-level Logistics Cluster.

It is important to note that the Logistics Cluster does not attempt to run logistics operations on behalf of participating organisations, but rather assumes that participating organisations will utilise the Logistics Cluster's services and capacities to strengthen their own logistics capabilities.

Logistics Cluster Activities and Responsibilities

The Logistics Cluster provides a unique opportunity for the humanitarian logistics community to exploit shared assets, aptitudes and competencies of the Logistics Cluster lead agency, the participating organisations and entities working within the cluster approach. The Global Logistics Cluster lead's role is to facilitate these joint ventures, both at global and field level, as to ensure system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies.

When activated in emergencies, Logistics Cluster operations vary in scale from information sharing and coordination (such as infrastructure assessment, port and corridor coordination, transporters and rates, customs, equipment supplier information) to those involving common air, ocean and overland transport, storage etc. WFP in its role as the Global Logistics Cluster lead agency undertakes the following:

Standards and Policy-Setting

- Development of standardized technical tools:
 - [Inter-agency Logistics Capacity Assessment](#).
 - [Logistics Operational Guide \(LOG\)](#).
 - [Geo-spatial Infrastructure, Maps, Information](#) (SDI-T geportal).
- Publication of policy documents:
 - [Logistics Cluster overview of assessment practice in emergencies](#).
 - [Logistics Cluster briefing paper on prioritisation in emergencies](#) (in PDF).
 - [Guidance for donors in order to avoid unsolicited bilateral donations](#) (in PDF).
- Maintenance of the information-sharing platform ([Logistics Cluster website](#)) and publication of standard Logistics Cluster situation reports, assessments, concept of operations and other coordination tools.

Building response capacity – Emergency preparedness

- Development of emergency training module at the local, national, regional and international levels such as the Logistics Response Team Training (LRT) and [Service Mindset Training \(SMT\)](#).
- Establishing and maintaining surge capacity and standby rosters for deployment in emergencies to support establishment of field-level clusters.
- Establishing and maintaining contingency stockpiles through the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD).
- Conducting Logistics Capacity Assessments for at-risk countries and participating in pandemic preparedness training with national authorities.

Operational support – Emergency response

- Deployment of experienced inter-agency logistics personnel for field cluster coordination and back-up support provided by the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell in Rome.
- Assessment of logistics gaps and challenges in field-level emergency response.
- Compilation of a joint response plan in support of humanitarian emergency programmes (ConOps).
- Establishment and maintenance of appropriate logistics coordination mechanisms among humanitarian actors, and local and national authorities.
- Provision of operational advice, best practices and troubleshooting assistance to cluster participants to address gaps, bottlenecks or duplications in the overall logistics operations.
- Pooling resources and ensuring complementarity of efforts through enhanced partnerships.
- Relief supplies transport coordination (surface and air).
- Warehousing/storage facilities.

- Negotiation of facilitation measures (i.e. customs and duty procedures) with local authorities and/or government counterparts on behalf of the cluster participants.
- Provision of information management and Geographic Information System (GIS) services to the humanitarian community. See [Case study](#)
- Liaison with civil and military actors. See [Case study](#)
- Advocacy and resource mobilization.
- Provision of common transport services where necessary. See [Case study](#)
- Concept of 'Provider of last resort'.

In order to fulfill the above outlined roles and responsibilities, WFP established the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell (GLCSC) hosted in the Logistics Division of its headquarters in Rome. It is comprised of a diverse, multi-skilled group of logisticians drawn from WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, ACF, Care International, MSB (formerly SRSA), and WVI. The primary goal of GLCSC is to mobilise surge capacity to provide logistics support to the global level humanitarian community and the country level Logistics Cluster Cells when activated.

Role of humanitarian organisation participating in the Logistics Cluster at the field level:

Humanitarian actors who participate in the development of common humanitarian action plans are expected to be proactive partners in assessing needs, developing strategies and plans for the sector, and implementing agreed priority activities. Provisions should also be made in sectoral groups for those humanitarian actors who may wish to participate as observers, mainly for information-sharing purposes. The specific roles are:

- participation in cluster activities and partnering;
- sharing organisation contingency plans;
- sharing information on supply pipeline; and
- sharing of assets.

The success of the cluster depends on the level of participation from other humanitarian organisations as well as trust and interest amongst participants. However, it is important to note that the participation in and/or use of these cluster services is under no circumstances compulsory. The Logistics Cluster is here to help and support the logistics operations of humanitarian actors, not to replace them.

Useful document: [Logistics Cluster work-plan](#).

Logistics Cluster Activation Process

The decision on the Logistics Cluster activation lies primarily in the need of the field operation. The Humanitarian Coordinator, in close consultation with the Country Team, is responsible for securing agreement on the establishment of appropriate sectors/clusters and sectoral groups, and for the designation of sector/cluster leads. This should be based on a clear assessment of needs and gaps, and on a mapping of response capacities, including those of the host government, local authorities, local civil society, international humanitarian organisations and other actors, as appropriate.

When clusters are needed:

- Humanitarian Coordinator or Resident Coordinator informs the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) at UN headquarters;
- Global cluster leads determine the nature of response required;
- country level cluster are established with activities according to the scale/nature of need.

If activation of the Logistics Cluster is foreseen, a Logistics Response Team (LRT) is sent to the field to assess the situation, determine whether activation of a Logistics Cluster is needed and/or what logistics support might be needed in country. If activated, the LRT usually initiates Logistics Cluster operations.

The LRT can be comprised of members from different organizations, including staff from the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell in Rome. It is important for field logisticians to get in touch with the members from the LRT, as their inputs count particularly at this stage.

Sometimes, the assessment might conclude that there is no need for Logistics Cluster activities, in which case this is reported back to the RC/HC and no country level cluster is established.

Source: [Logistics Cluster definitions, reporting lines and activation process](#).

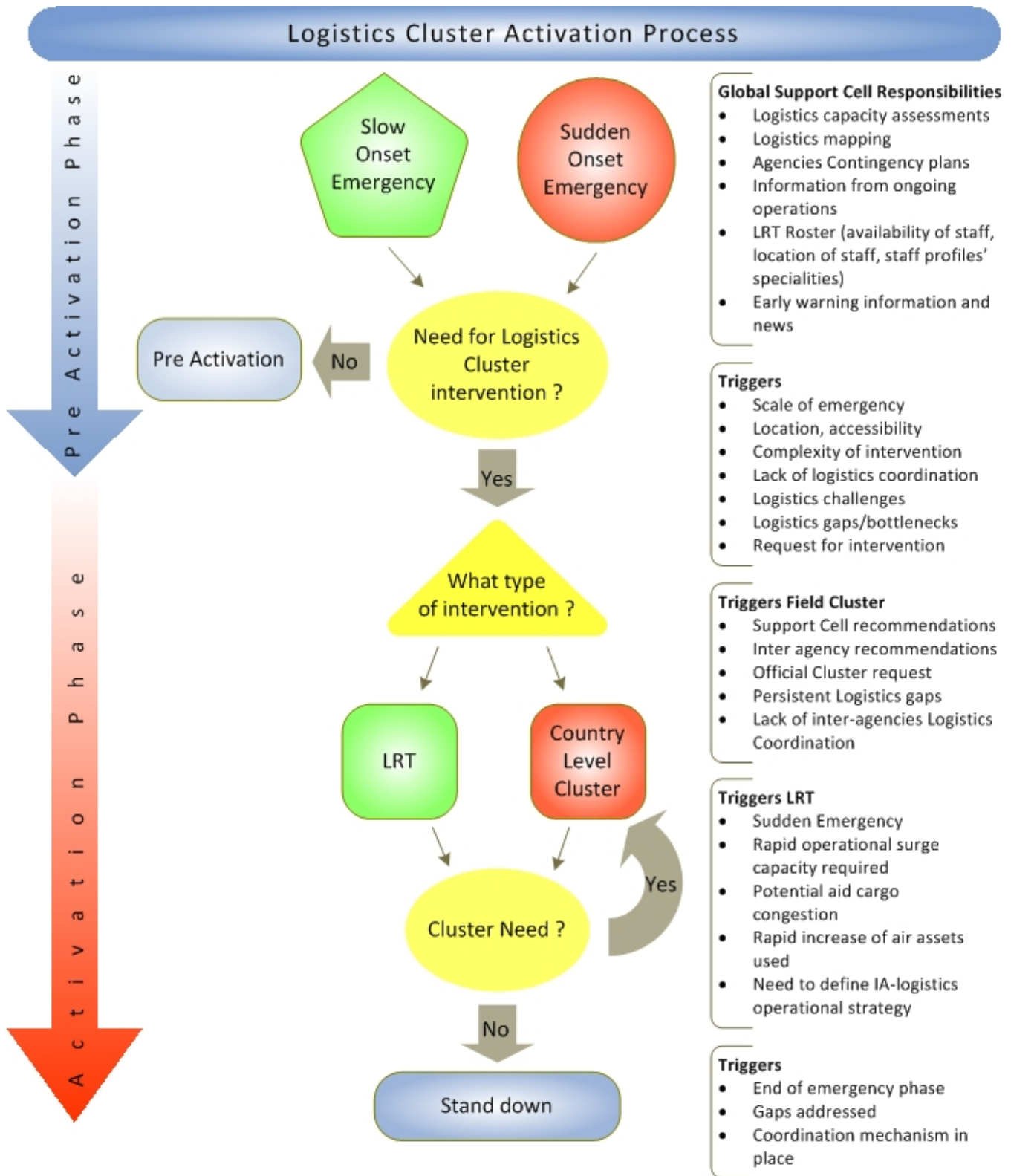


Diagram 1: Activation process

Cluster Reporting Lines and Accountability

Globally, the cluster leads are "accountable to the Emergency relief Coordinator (ERC) for ensuring predictable and effective inter-agency preparedness and response within the concerned areas of activity". At field level, the head of the Logistics Cluster lead agency (WFP) reports to the Humanitarian Coordinator / Resident Coordinator. There is a technical reporting line between field level Logistics Clusters and the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell (based in WFP's headquarters). The Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell provides guidance and support to field level Logistics Clusters.

The cluster approach itself does not require that humanitarian actors be held accountable to sector leads. Likewise, it does not demand accountability of non-UN actors to UN agencies. Individual humanitarian organizations can only be held accountable to sector leads in cases where they have made specific commitment to this effect.

Source: [Log Cluster definition-reporting Line-Activation Process](#)

Logistics Cluster Reporting Lines

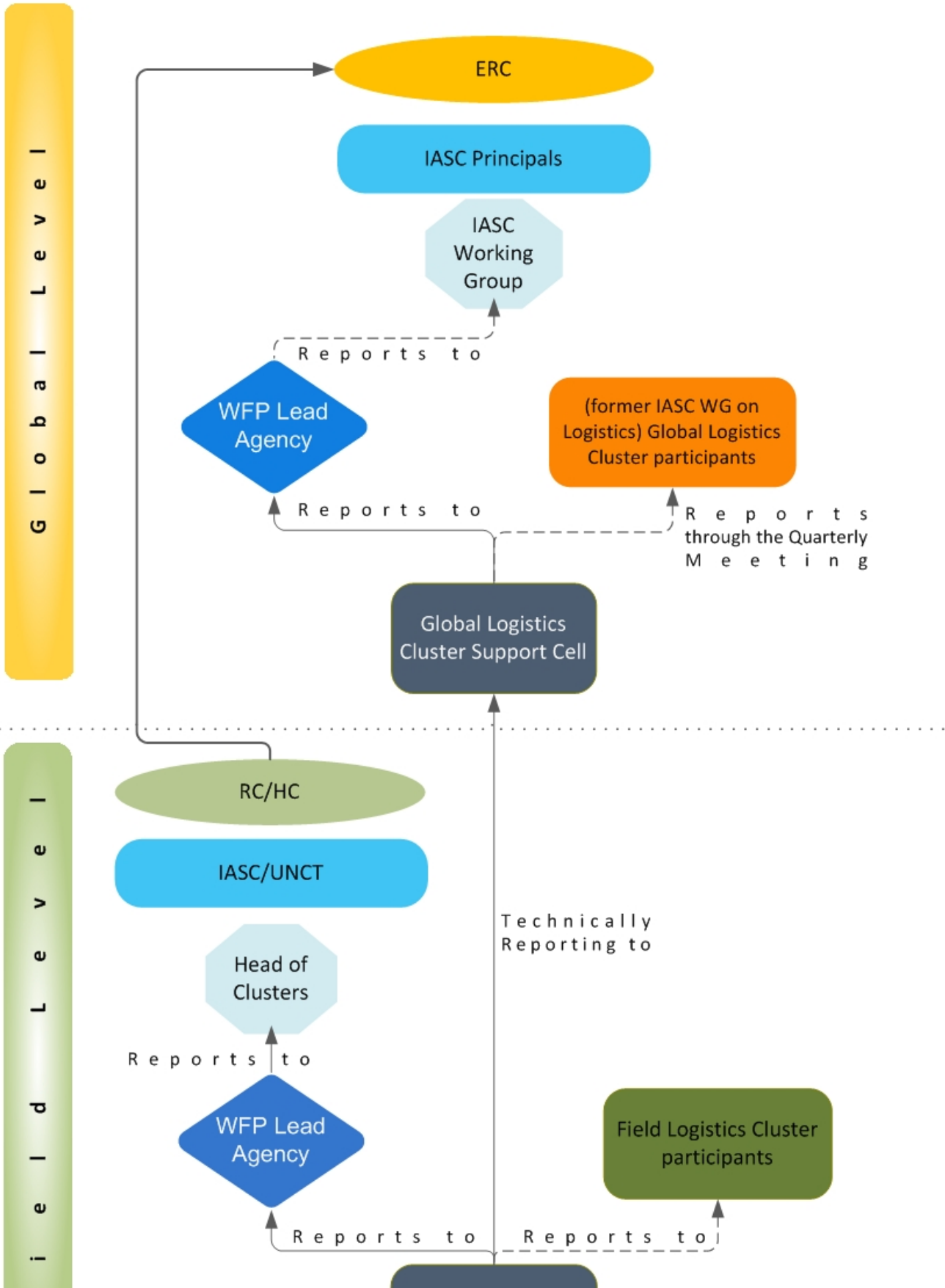




Diagram 2: Reporting Lines

Resources and Tools

- [Logistics Cluster website](#)
- [Logistics Capacity Assessments](#)
- [Customs Information Guide](#)
- [Service Mindset Training \(SMT\)](#)
- [MapCentre](#)

Links

- [Humanitarian Reform](#)
- [Humanitarian Appeal \(CAP\)](#)
- [CERF](#)
- [IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response 24 November 2006](#)