The Agencies leading/co-leading humanitarian clusters and working groups and their national government counterparts commit to work as recommended by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance re. the Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities endorsed in 2011 and, the 2006 IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response in accordance with the humanitarian principles.

This commitment is made to (1) promote government national leadership/ownership of the cluster system in Bangladesh; (2) enhance information sharing between the parties for informed decision-making processes on joint interventions in disaster risk management; (3) promote broader engagement of interested organizations in clusters/working groups’ work; (4) strengthen accountability of clusters/working groups’ members with clusters/working groups’ decisions; (5) promote tailored, efficient and effective capacity-building initiatives that respond to national priorities at central and local levels in line with their obligations under international and national law and; (6) enhanced quality decision-making at HCTT through enhanced consultation, representativity and voice of its members.

Once approved by HCTT Members, notably by the MoDMR, these terms of engagement should be annexed and/or incorporated as is in clusters/working groups’ ToRs. Clusters/working groups’ ToRs should inform how these terms of engagement will be operationalized through clusters/working groups’ work.

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The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of 1991, paragraphs 3 to 5, national authorities have primary responsibility for taking care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring in their territory:

- The affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.
- Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives should continue to make a significant contribution in supplementing national efforts.
- States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of these organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines, shelter and health care, for which access to victims is essential.

The Government of Bangladesh has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of emergencies occurring on its territory by initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance. The UN Resident Coordinator should support national efforts by leading and coordinating humanitarian action of relevant organizations in Bangladesh, whenever possible in support of and in coordination with national and local authorities.

**Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms**

- In 2012, a humanitarian coordination system in Bangladesh was established following a consultative process to review disaster preparedness and response arrangements. The review was jointly led by the MoDMR Secretary and, by the UN RC.
- This process resulted in the establishment of the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT), the 10 humanitarian clusters and several working groups contextualizing standard mechanism used by United Nations humanitarian actors and their international partners.
- In addition to its coordination function, the HCTT plays a vital role in formalizing and strengthening the relationship between the Government of Bangladesh and national and international humanitarian organizations.
- Agreed on national approved clusters support and/or complement wherever possible the efforts of national authorities in key sectors of preparedness and response. The cluster will co-led with the national authorities have relevant key expertise on the particulate sector with the relevant humanitarian agency.
- The Resident Coordinator (RC) and cluster humanitarian Co-led Agencies are responsible for consulting national authorities regarding the ‘preparedness’ activities carried out in the country. Wherever possible, international humanitarian actors should then organize themselves to support or complement existing
national response mechanisms rather than create parallel ones which may actually weaken or undermine national efforts.

- Generally, coordination mechanisms will take the form of cluster meetings at the national and local level, though arrangements will vary from cluster to cluster and according to context. Where appropriate and practical, government leads should be actively encouraged to co-chair cluster meetings with their humanitarian cluster co-led Agency counterparts.

**National authorities will lead or contribute**

- The RC and Cluster Lead Agencies will identify the government entities responsible for different areas of response and recovery.

- The Cluster Lead Agencies should meet with these corresponding government counterparts and where necessary, explain what the government can expect from the humanitarian cluster co-led Agency and cluster partners.

- The cluster co-led agencies agree together on appropriate coordination mechanisms which cover all the humanitarian needs of the affected population for that sector (including cross-cutting issues), building on existing arrangements.

- The clusters lack a formal government counterpart can’t be operate unless the Bangladesh Government has formal request for international assistance.

**Coordinating the Sectoral Response**

- The cluster co-led Agencies should work closely jointly developing priorities and strategies for the sector and on monitoring and follow-up to ensure that programmes and initiatives continue to meet changing needs.

- Agreement should be reached on either undertaking joint activities with national authorities or agreeing on separate but complementary activities with compatible standards and approaches.

- The agreement applies to all aspects of the humanitarian response including: the mapping of national and international response capacities and gaps, contingency planning, emergency preparedness, needs assessment and analysis, prioritization and strategy development, information management and communication, monitoring, reporting and evaluation, and the transition from relief to development.

- The cluster partners and national authorities should also jointly agree on the technical standards and tools to be applied by the cluster partners, whether they are international (perhaps adapted for local use) or national. These standards and tools should be ones which are already/can be used across the sector after the humanitarian emergency, to ensure continuity.
Cluster Lead Agencies and Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO) should aim to ensure that information management activities support and strengthen existing national information systems rather than replacing or diminishing them.

Cluster Lead Agencies and RCO are responsible for ensuring that contact lists and ‘Who does what where’ (3W) data are regularly updated. Such information should be shared with national authorities unless the political situation makes this inappropriate.

**Strengthening National Response Capacities**

Whenever possible, Cluster should ensure that the activities of international humanitarian actors within and across clusters build on and strengthen the capacities of national authorities, as well as national NGOs, community-based organizations, affected communities and other local actors.

The cluster co-led Agencies should promote capacity-building initiatives which may include the provision of technical assistance, training (e.g. to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to provide effective leadership) and support for national authorities to meet their obligations under international and national law.

The cluster co-led Agencies should ensure that the coordination mechanisms of the cluster approach and the activities of cluster partners contribute to national emergency preparedness efforts and to the longer-term development process.