



Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster in North Sudan

Humanitarian clusters have become the standard business model for the coordination of humanitarian responses in both large-scale, sudden-onset disasters and protracted crises and other complex emergencies, such as in the Sudan. Humanitarian clusters support the coordination of integrated, needs-based, timely and appropriate responses. The Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster in Sudan strengthens the individual (and collective) capacities of international and national cluster partners and empowers them to make more informed and better coordinated planning and programming decisions within their respective areas of expertise, leading to more coordinated, integrated, needs-based food security responses ranging from life-saving food assistance and time critical agricultural assistance, to agropastoral livelihood restoration and early recovery and also strengthening linkages and synergies with other sectoral responses (e.g. for water and sanitation, nutrition and health, etc.).

Significant advances in FSL Cluster leadership and action have taken place since 2009, especially in North Sudan, with particular emphasis on Darfur. The FSL Cluster is jointly led by Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry in North Sudan and by two international co-leads – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The Cluster builds on pre-existing sectoral coordination mechanisms, but gained new impetus following the December 2008 decision to formally establish humanitarian clusters, in line with international good practice.

The FSL Cluster brings together more than 60 United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Government food security partners in Khartoum and Darfur. A full-time international Cluster Coordinator was appointed by FAO in early 2010, jointly supervised by FAO and WFP, and dedicated area cluster coordinators have been appointed in North, West and South Darfur states. Further full-time regional coordinators will be appointed in other parts of North Sudan in 2011, as resources become available. The FSL Cluster meets regularly in Khartoum and Darfur. Crop, livestock and environment working groups provide focused technical guidance and support to cluster partners along with long-established coordination mechanisms for food distribution and other food assistance activities.

Mission of the FSL Cluster

The overall aim of the FSL Cluster is to contribute to increased impacts of food security responses at household and community levels through strengthened coordination between food security partners. In particular, the FSL Cluster:

- provides leadership and coordination support for all food security-related humanitarian activities, including life-saving food distribution, food voucher distribution and related food assistance activities, time-critical agricultural support and efforts to restore livelihoods and foster durable early recovery;
- increases accountability, predictability, quality, timeliness and effectiveness of food security and livelihoods responses;
- facilitates effective information sharing among all FSL Cluster partners;
- leads the development of coordinated, integrated, evidence-based humanitarian food security responses in line with the needs of crisis-affected households and communities;
- builds the technical and operational capacities of cluster partners to increase their ability to provide effective food security and livelihoods-related support and assistance;
- raises preparedness of cluster partners for future emergencies and coordinates contingency planning among partners;
- ensures strong technical and operational linkages between UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies, NGOs and the Government in order to ensure the most effective and durable impacts for crisis-affected households and communities; and
- advocates and mobilizes resources on behalf of all sector partners, and for food security and livelihoods in general.

DARFUR – Key 2010 achievements

- Full operationalization of the cluster approach and working groups in North, West and South Darfur.
- Completion of a comprehensive “who, what, where” (3W) mapping exercise.
- Integrated crop assessments and coordinated disease outbreak monitoring and surveillance systems established.
- Joint monitoring and reporting system set up for collecting and analyzing data on harvest prospects, market information and other food security indicators.
- Early recovery training, planning and programme undertaken by cluster partners.
- Coordinated food security and livelihoods planning exercises between cluster partners.
- Platform for common information-sharing among cluster partners established.
- Strengthened technical collaboration between FAO, WFP and other cluster partners.
- Capacity building/training to build local partner capacities on: climate change, project cycle management, contingency planning, strategic planning, data management and analysis, and reporting and future training/capacity building needs identified.

Activities in progress

- Contingency planning and joint food security and livelihoods strategy and work plan development for 2010/2011.
- Joint resource mobilization initiatives to support food security and to restore and strengthen agropastoral livelihoods.
- Capacity building of local partners, including on the provision of agricultural and livelihood support services, vulnerability assessments, and the preparedness, planning and coordination of emergency response activities.
- Joint peacebuilding and local conflict resolution activities.
- Adoption of SPHERE-based minimum standards for food security and livelihoods-related activities in Darfur; FSL minimum standards in collaboration with the global Food Security Cluster and partners.
- Ongoing assessment of local partners’ capacity building needs and gaps.
- Further coordination and strengthening of partnerships to ensure accountability, more effective targeting and resource efficiency.

Challenges

- Access gaps: Continuing insecurity limits people’s access to key natural resources and land areas vital for livestock and crop production and reduces the opportunities for the durable restoration of livelihoods throughout Darfur. Wide-ranging insecurity also hampers the operational footprint of humanitarian partners, affecting their capacity to provide support in key zones.
- Funding gaps: Despite generous support from donors, resource gaps continue to be significant – an estimated USD 24 372 589 (FAO) for 2010 alone – with particular shortfalls linked to livelihood restoration and the needs of newly displaced populations.
- Capacity gaps: Significant capacity gaps remain within many local cluster partners, relating to technical expertise on a range of livelihood restoration activities, including limited support for basic services, i.e. assessments, transportation, etc.
- Information gaps: Quality of data, gaps in information management and non-availability of a robust and common information database on food security and livelihood situations and needs throughout Darfur.

Future needs and opportunities

- Chronic food insecurity, income poverty, recurrent natural disasters and extreme livelihood vulnerability will continue to affect large sections of the population throughout 2011.
- Strengthened and increasingly coordinated food security and livelihoods-related information collection and analysis, strategy development, planning, programming and responses to support internally displaced households, returnees, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration participants and resident households affected by conflict will further improve the sustainability and durability of outcomes.
- The expected establishment of a FAO/WFP co-led global Food Security Cluster at the end of 2010 to provide systematic, predictable and timely support to all humanitarian food security clusters, including in North Sudan, on information management, surge support, capacity building tools and guidelines and advocacy/resource mobilization, could greatly benefit the FSL Cluster in general and all cluster partners
- **Effective coordination costs money! The FSL Cluster will continue to need resources to support dedicated cluster coordination and information management throughout 2011 for the benefit of all cluster partners in North Sudan and Darfur.**