Embracing Ceremonial Authority

Coordinating Education in Emergencies through the Education Cluster – illustrated by the cases of Mali and Nigeria

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by

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Abstract

This study, informed by various sociological neo-institutional approaches, investigates whether a global mechanism such as the cluster approach represents an adequate framework to structuring humanitarian response.

It sheds light on the coordination of education in emergencies (EiE), a relatively new area of intervention within the humanitarian system, whose importance, despite countless advocacy attempts at the international level, is contested both by donors and humanitarian practitioners. The humanitarian system itself, today considered a professionalized organizational field, seems unable to adequately respond to the increasingly numerous and complex contemporary crises that have evolved in the course of the past few decades.

Through an examination of documents focusing on the performance of clusters as well as semi-structured interviews with EiE experts involved in the response in Mali and Nigeria, the author identifies internal and external factors that have an impact in one form or another on the performance of Education Clusters in these contexts.

Main findings suggest that: 1) both analysis of the literature and expert interviews reveal precisely the same factors (in-country situation, HR capacity, prioritization of EiE, advocacy for EiE, funding for EiE, collaboration across levels) as having had the most influence on the work of Education Clusters in the past few years. The question arises of to what degree organizational learning within the humanitarian system in general, and within the cluster approach in particular, has been researched 2) determining whether the roots of potential influential factors are inherent in the nature of the cluster approach as a coordination mechanism or stem from the external environment in which Education Clusters are embedded (e.g. Mali and Nigeria) remains a challenge 3) decoupling in the practical implementation of EiE activities from the formal structure of the cluster approach is inevitable due to the complex and fragmented interplay of local, national and international actors operating at the different intervention levels

From a sociological neo-institutional perspective, the urge to create coordination mechanisms can be linked to increased uncertainty as to how to tackle new challenges in the landscape of crises and conflicts within an ever-growing, multi-dimensional humanitarian system. Coordination mechanisms may be considered as being established to fulfilling imagined needs and expectations – what might be termed myths – of the contemporary society/international community. Given the current challenges the humanitarian system, and especially EiE, face the question arises: To what extent does the structuring of humanitarian action through standardized approaches contribute to progress and improvement and at which point are boundaries reached eventually resulting in a counterproductive situation?
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<tr>
<td>ACAPS</td>
<td>Assessment Capacities Project</td>
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<td>ALNAP</td>
<td>Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance</td>
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<td>AQIM</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb</td>
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<td>CAE</td>
<td>Cluster Approach Evaluation</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organization</td>
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<td>CCPM</td>
<td>Cluster Coordination Performance Management</td>
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<td>CLA</td>
<td>Cluster Lead Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHA</td>
<td>Department of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Education Cluster</td>
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<td>ECU</td>
<td>Education Cluster Unit</td>
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<td>ESWG</td>
<td>Education Sector Working Group</td>
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<td>ECSG</td>
<td>Education Cluster Strategic Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>EHC</td>
<td>Emergency Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>EiE</td>
<td>Education in Emergencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>EiE WG</td>
<td>Education in Emergencies Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>Emergency Relief Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>FMOE</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>GCLA</td>
<td>Global Cluster Lead Agency</td>
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<td>GEC</td>
<td>Global Education Cluster</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>HCT</td>
<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome</td>
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<td>HPC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Programme Cycle</td>
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<td>HRNO</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Needs Overview</td>
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<td>HNO</td>
<td>Humanitarian Needs Overview</td>
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<td>HRP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally displaced person</td>
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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore to what extent it is adequate to coordinate humanitarian assistance according to a mechanism designed and consolidated at the global level and which could be factors that influence its practical implementation.

The focus here is on the Education Cluster, a coordination mechanism established in 2007 as part of the cluster approach to structure the provision of education activities in emergency situations. The cluster approach, created in 2005, was one of the outcomes of the humanitarian reform process initiated the same year by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) together with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). By separating and organizing the provision of emergency response in thematic “clusters” “a more timely, predictable and effective implementation of humanitarian assistance may be ensured” (Adinolfi/Bassiouni/Lauritzen/Williams 2005; cit. in: Papadopoulos 2010).

While education is universally considered to be essential to both the development of society and of the individual, the argument that it is an instrumental part of immediate humanitarian assistance is being contested within the humanitarian system.

This is surprising since, from a sociological neo-institutional perspective, it can be argued that the establishment of the field of Education in Emergencies (EiE) within that of humanitarian action was to a great part made possible by a transformation of the humanitarian system itself, one that started in the 20th century, and which can be seen as being supported by four cultural processes: rationalization, professionalization, individualization and education.

These factors have contributed considerably to the development of the humanitarian system as a professional field, which has never been larger in terms of human and financial resources. And yet, according to recent research, it is overwhelmed by contemporary crises and seems unable to respond to increasing demands (ALNAP 2015: 7).

The question of efficiency in coordination of emergency response activities is a topical one; especially considering the various humanitarian situations in past years characterized by a lack of coordination (two examples being the Darfur refugee crisis in 2004 or the Indian Ocean tsunami in that same year). The question is whether the cluster approach, which was introduced at a global level as one of the most recent attempts to structure the work of the humanitarian system, actually functions as originally intended.

This study will investigate to what extent coordination of humanitarian response through a global mechanism such as the Education Cluster is adequate and whether factors leading to a deviating implementation of coordination activities from a formal structure are inherent in the coordination mechanism itself or dependent on the context within which the cluster operates.
To make the results of this investigation measurable, two hypotheses examining the prevalence of factors that might have an impact on the implementation of an education response were designed:

**H1a) Factors influencing a successful education response are mainly internal**

**H1b) Factors influencing a successful education response are mainly external**

According to Rowan/Meyer (1977: 340), coordination mechanisms such as the Global Education Cluster, or the cluster approach it is based on, can be seen as formal organizational structures that are generated in order to respond to societal expectations.

Often, however, what these structures present to the external spectator (i.e. society), does not actually correspond to the internal practice of the mechanism in a specific situation. It is supposed that such deviations or the drifting apart of practical activities from an agreed structure or, as Rowan/Meyer term it, *decoupling*, is more prevalent in contexts of chaos and unpredictability common to emergency situations.

Given the complexity of humanitarian crisis situations, one may suppose that there are several external factors stemming from the environment within which Education Clusters\(^1\) operate, as well as factors stemming from this coordination mechanism itself, both influencing the practical application of a global coordination mechanism to lower levels (be they national, regional, or local), resulting in the decoupling of practical activities from formal structures.

Despite being considered low priority within the humanitarian system, EiE has recently been given a funding platform, the “‘Education Cannot Wait Fund’”\(^2\): while the launch of this platform, given that one of EiE’s main problems has been its chronic lack of funding, can be seen as a success, pressure for the Education Cluster to be more accountable and capable of justifying its working methods to different stakeholders (i.e. donors) will naturally increase because of that success.

The central research question will be analysed empirically by comparing the implementation of Education Cluster activities in Mali and Nigeria in two stages: 1) through an analysis of documents focusing on clusters’ performance and 2) through the conduct of semi-structured interviews with experts involved in any way in EiE coordination activities.

The four world cultural processes (rationalization, professionalization, individualization, education) introduced at the beginning and the decoupling approach mentioned briefly above will be discussed in

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\(^1\) In this paper, when referring to “‘Education Clusters’”, implementing structures at national and local level are meant. When referring to “‘the Education Cluster’” as global coordination mechanism, the “‘Global Education Cluster’” is meant, which is, like other global clusters, aligned to joint frameworks created at the global level by IASC to guide the functioning of clusters (e.g. the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination (2015))

\(^2\) The “‘Education Cannot Wait Fund’” was launched in the framework of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 in Istanbul. As the first global fund to prioritize education in humanitarian action, it strives to increase political, operational and financial commitment to build more sustainable education systems.
greater detail together with organizational field theory in Chapter 2. These neo-institutional approaches serve to describe the emergence of the EiE field within an evolving humanitarian system, as well as the creation of the Education Cluster to coordinate the delivery of education response (Chapter 3). This background information is important before moving to the Mali and Nigeria case studies (Chapter 4). We will conclude with a thorough analysis of findings from both cases and recommend avenues for future research (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Given the limited amount of academic literature on the coordination of humanitarian assistance and the performance of Education Clusters in specific countries (see section entitled “Current state of research”), we hope that this paper will contribute new research-based knowledge useful to implementers, funding partners, donors, the INEE, etc. and serve as a basis for further research.

**Current state of research**

A thorough review of the literature shows that the question of decoupling within the humanitarian system has been investigated only to a very limited extent. One of the papers dealing most closely with the question of effectiveness of the cluster approach was published in 2015 by ALNAP and focuses on the optimal level of coordination in humanitarian clusters and what factors foster successful coordination of emergency response. It is interesting to note certain similarities between results gathered from the ALNAP study and the present research.

Another interesting paper was one written by Vanessa Humphries (2013); it focuses on challenges and lessons learned from the implementation of the cluster approach with respect to improving humanitarian coordination. Its main finding is that the cluster approach is currently the most appropriate structure for relief coordination and has increased the effectiveness of humanitarian action. Humphries’s research might be expanded by a more detailed analysis of the reasons for the emergence of identified challenges.

Other documents providing information on the implementation of the cluster approach in general and the Education Cluster in particular appeared in the form of independent evaluations and annual reviews: for example, the Cluster Approach Evaluation (CAE) (2010) or the Global Education Cluster Report (2015). In certain cases, varied country-specific progress and final reports (produced by entities such as Save the Children or UNICEF) can be accessed publicly; however, while providing a good overview on achievements, challenges and recommendations, these remain rather superficial and lacking any follow-up (meaning that one cannot know whether lessons learned and recommendations made were considered in the response the subsequent year).

Other publications focus mainly on the role of education within the relief-development discussion (Mendenhall, 2014) and within the humanitarian system in general, or at times on the politicization of education aid (Novelli, 2010). A paper considered to be a good reference for this thesis is Bromley/Andina’s ‘‘Standardizing Chaos’’ (2010), which gives an overall view of the emergence of the
EiE field, and more specifically, discusses the drawing up of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (MSEE) from a neo-institutional perspective. Bromley/Andina question the efficacy of global standards to structure a field characterized by chaos, a point we aim to discuss in this paper as well, particularly in view of the fact that, according to neo-institutionalism, elements such as professionalization and standardization characterize the contemporary world and are actually intended to foster progress.

2. The emergence of coordination mechanisms through a sociological neo-institutional lens

Following two world wars, the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar world order, an assumption was made that contemporary problems cannot be tackled by centralized entities such as nation states, because those problems extend beyond national boundaries (Bromley/Meyer 2014: 4). Growing interconnectedness in terms of worldwide communication, economics, politics and culture has led to increased awareness of the “global village” as a new paradigm of social life. Sociological neo-institutionalists define the arena of these cross-border interactions as the “world society”.

The absence of one or more controlling entities in this new world order has created a sense of uncertainty, which has given rise to an urge for systematization of social life according to standardized and generalized rules and schemes. As a result, there has been an increase in rationalization, professionalization, individualization and education, all of which characterize the contemporary world society and which, according to sociological neo-institutionalists, are decisive for its constitution and continued existence. These processes were thought to bring about stability, predictability and order in a world undergoing major structural changes throughout the 20th century.

Because of the universally held understanding and interpretation of rules, principles and norms linked to these four elements, they are termed (world) cultural processes.

These world cultural processes are instrumental for three interrelated occurrences that are essential for the formulation of the main argument underpinning this research: a) the transformation of the humanitarian system3, b) the emergence of a drive to structure that system through the introduction of coordination mechanisms and c) the establishment and consolidation of the EiE field on a global level.

Rationalization, for example, has increased especially since World War II owing to a greater interest in science and scientific method as a way of explaining the world in a comprehensible, rational way. Not

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3 The humanitarian system today is composed of different specialized sectors, countless actors engaged in providing humanitarian aid and development activities, and different more or less structured attempts to coordinate humanitarian action, or at least anticipate and “structure the chaos” at different levels (global, national and local) (see Chapter 3).
only have more scientific organizations been created since that time, but the range of fields of investigation has broadened as well (Drori/Meyer/Hwang 2006: 13f.).

The general application and recognition of science, its structuring and rationalizing character, has given it much legitimacy and global authority, and has increased its relevance to other fields such as politics, economics and culture (Meyer/Bromley 2013: 371). A stronger investment in the generation of expertise in various areas of society has furthered the formation of specialized consultation structures, termed ‘epistemic communities’ (Haas 1992: 2). Professionalization and rationalization are thus two harmonizing, interrelated elements playing a crucial role in the constitution of the world society, along with a third element, individualization. With increased perception of the world and interactions beyond State boundaries, and especially after two world wars and the end of the bipolar East-West world order, the focus has shifted to the individual as the key actor in society, whose rights are to be protected (Meyer/Jepperson 2000, cit. in Drori/Meyer/Hwang 2006: 14). Meyer et al. write of the emergence of a global human rights movement, driven by the idea of the individual as actor, someone who has the ability to solve problems and stand for his/her rights. The growth of global human rights activities has been especially apparent in the second half of the 20th century (McCarthy/Mayer 1977: 1217–8, cit. in: Meyer/Bromley 2013: 372).

Increasing individualization and a demand for empowered, responsible citizens have enhanced awareness of the importance of education as a means to respond to this requirement. Education is perceived as essential in modern societies and was declared a universal human right in 1948. However, targeted advocacy for education to be accepted as such a universal right did not exist until the 1990s (Winthrop 2013: 17).

These four cultural factors (rationalization, professionalization, individualization and education) require, determine and reinforce one another. They facilitate exchanges between societal systems, maintain the functioning of the world society, and are believed to foster its evolution. The world society, in turn, becomes acknowledged as the primary locus of rationalization and systematization. As such, it provides space for the development of solutions to problems resulting from the stateless nature of the world system. These solutions appear in form of organizations or, within the framework of this paper, coordination mechanisms, and aim to systematize different areas of social life (Boli/Thomas 1997: 196). Whether these are truly capable of responding to contemporary problems will be discussed later on.

Increasing professionalization and the rationalization of processes, the definition of universal norms, laws and directives and the definition of penalties seem to bring about a sense of structure in a world in the midst of major structural changes and characterized by uncertainty towards future developments of the world situation. The universality of these four cultural factors enables an adaptation of cultural norms on the local, national and international levels and explains world-wide similarities between extant organized entities and emerging ones (Meyer/Bromley 2013: 369).
The incorporation of the above-mentioned cultural factors and the lack of a superior decision-making authority and control system is assumed to equip these structures with other features: legitimization and actorhood. As “actors” in the world society they no longer have only a functional character, but are based on socially recognized norms, rules as well as hard and soft law (Khurana 2010; Khurana/Nohria 2008, cit. in Meyer/Bromley 2013: 383). This shift in the character of organizations and their perceived necessity in an increasingly borderless global arena, however, raises expectations towards organizations and constructs with similar characteristics (e.g. coordination mechanisms) whose survival depends on the support of relevant stakeholders such as authorities, collaborators, members and target groups.

In order to conform to the evolving technical, institutional and local expectations of their environments, organizations strive to expand and adapt their formal structure, since this is essential to the way they are perceived externally (Meyer/Scott 1983, cit. in Meyer/Bromley 2013: 383). The more an organization’s structure is aligned with the expectations of its institutional environment, the greater its level of conformity and reliability and the less it needs internal coordination, inspection and evaluation. This may offer an explanation for the creation of coordination mechanisms within the landscape of humanitarian assistance, which has witnessed situations in which there was inefficient coordination between actors already in place. This in turn has led to scepticism and criticism from important stakeholders such as donors and States; attempts at structuring that aim to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance\(^4\) have been seen as one solution.

An explanation of Boli/Thomas’s observation that entities within the growing landscape of non-governmental organizations between 1875 and 1973 increasingly showed striking similarities was offered by Di Maggio/Power (1983), who argue that homogeneity, especially among organizations of a specific type (i.e. with a similar mandate or objective) can come about by the increased formalization of organizational structures mentioned above. They distinguish three ways in which homogeneity, or isomorphism as they also term it, can occur: coercive isomorphism refers to the adaptation of laws and regulations imposed by higher authorities such as the State. The imitation of other (more successful) models occurs as a response to uncertainty (mimetic isomorphism) and finally, the assimilation of organizations can be governed by the adaptation or non-adaptation of specific practices that may exert influence on the reputation of an organization (normative isomorphism) (Di Maggio/Power 1983: 150).

Related to their argument, and as a means to facilitate differentiation within the increasing number of organizations across different domains of society, in 1983 Di Maggio and Powell developed the concept of organizational fields. These they describe as “Communities of disparate organizations, including producers, consumers, overseers and advisors that engage in common activities, subject to similar reputational and regulatory pressures” (Powell 2007: 3).

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\(^4\) One of the earliest attempts was the launch of the Sphere Project, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.
Di Maggio and Powell establish different criteria to determine whether or not an entity belongs to an organizational field. For example, an organizational field is characterized by a higher intensity of interactions between similar organizations. Furthermore, field members should develop the feeling that they belong to the same community and be aware of the fellow members of their field5 (Powell 2007: 3f.).

In this paper, the concept of field will be mentioned within the evolution of the humanitarian system, and further on, when shedding light on the emergence of EiE as a distinct intervention area within the humanitarian structure. In addition, it is believed that different coordination mechanisms designed to structure the work of the humanitarian system can be conceived as determining a separate field6.

DiMaggio/Powell explain similarities in the formal structure of organized entities, be they non-governmental organizations or coordination mechanisms, by means of processes of isomorphism activated in order to respond to growing expectations in their social and institutional environments. At a deeper level, it is important to understand what these expectations, that have a considerable impact on organizations’ raison d’être, entail, and whether those expectations can be met by organized entities. As mentioned, changes in organizational structures, and the emergence of new forms, may be in response to requirements imposed by their respective environments, which have a rule-like character and are generally well accepted. In reality, however, these requirements are based on a shared meaning system, on shared beliefs or interpretations of how formal organizations are supposed to be and function (Berger/Luckmann 1967, cit. in Meyer/Rowan 1977: 341). Structuring elements that result in part from the four world cultural processes, such as shared standards, rules or efficiency measures, may be seen as myths accepted and legitimized by society.

Organizations adapt their formal structure in order to conform to the institutional requirements of their respective environment, but they might, in doing so, adopt elements that do not necessarily add value to

5 Further to these two elements, a field can, according to the authors, be characterised by the emergence of clear hierarchical levels or an increase in information exchange within the field that needs to be processed by field members (Powell 2007: 3f.).

6 Despite having been further developed and refined by other colleagues (see below), in the context of this paper the field concept as it was introduced by Di Maggio/Powell, can be seen to have certain deficiencies. For example, when attempting to delimit the field boundaries of the humanitarian system, EiE, or different humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

Other sociologists who worked on the further development of Di Maggio/Powells definition of organizational fields were Scott (1994, 2008); Hoffman (1999); Davis/Marquis (2005); Wooten/Hoffman (2008); Fligstein/McAdam (2012) (Furnari 2015: 1). While they all agree on the idea that organizational fields are composed of material elements (i.e. interaction patterns between field members in relation to resource exchanges or information flows) and cultural-cognitive elements (joint interpretation systems within a field) opinions differ regarding the intensity of interactions and the definition of field boundaries. Especially the latter, involving the mutual awareness of field members as belonging to a field, has been identified as a major challenge for sociologists, if for no other reason but that it relies on empirical measurement (Fligstein/McAdam 2012: 216; Evans/Key, 2008, cit. in: Furnari, 2015: 3). This lack of a means of clearly defining field boundaries presents a challenge when trying to differentiate the constructs defined as fields in this paper.
the organization’s core objectives and may be difficult to implement, inefficient or totally unfeasible (Bromley/Powell 2012: 33). As a result, organizations may not implement their practical work activities in accordance with the formal structure they present to the outside world (Meyer/Rowan 1977: 341). While there are different solutions for organizations to cope with the resulting gap between practice and formal structure (Meyer/Rowan 1977: 356), the focus in this paper will be on the mechanism known as decoupling. Whereas Glassman (1973), March and Olsen (1975), and Weick (1976) describe the relationship of systems to other entities as loosely coupled (Weick 1976: 3), Meyer and Rowan (1977) introduce the concept of decoupling to describe a situation in which actual work activities deviate from a prescribed formal structure influenced by institutional rules established and acknowledged by modern society (Bromley/Powell 2012: 5).

Bromley/Powell take the idea of decoupling one step further, arguing that this gap can express itself not only as a deviation between policy and practice, but also as one between an activity’s means and ends. While policy/practice decoupling focuses on the translation of formal structures into actual work activities, means/ends decoupling refers to a gradual deviation in the process of implementation of an initially agreed upon formal structure, such that the relationship between objectives and results is obscured (Bromley/Powell 2012: 15).

Within the context of the present paper, policy/practice decoupling may be used to analyse deviations in the actual implementation of cluster activities. Means/ends decoupling may be applied to the observation that at times humanitarian actors are liable to devote far too many resources to the process of emergency response coordination, while losing sight of the actual objective: alleviating the suffering of affected populations. Both approaches can be used to investigate the purpose, creation and adequateness of coordination mechanisms, partially as a response to criticism of the work of the humanitarian system as inefficient and unstructured.

It is important to understand that the consequences of decoupling should not be judged as exclusively negative or positive; decoupling simply refers to the degree a practical activity or outcome differs from an intended purpose. Since in this paper, however, we are interested in learning about factors that make it difficult to implement practical activities according to a formal structure, the focus will not be on any positive effects decoupling causes.

The assumption of earlier theories: namely, that coordination and control and, thus, strict alignment with formal structures is essential for success, is countered by the observation (based on empirical research, e.g., Dalton 1959; Downs 1967; Homans 1950, in Meyer/Rowan 1977: 342) that often organizations merely maintain an appearance of alignment with formal structures in order to be viewed as legitimate

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7 One of the first scholars who theorized about both forms of loosely coupled systems (policy/practice and means/ends) was Karl E. Weick (1976)
by the external world. It can be questioned then to what extent coordination mechanisms are truly capable of coordinating humanitarian action and to what extent they actually do so.

The four world cultural processes, the field concept and the decoupling approach are considered suitable approaches for the investigation of the emergence of coordination mechanisms within a seemingly chaotic humanitarian system. These neo-institutional perspectives will be applied to the Education Cluster as a mechanism created to structure the work of the EiE field, struggling to be acknowledged and given higher priority in the arena of humanitarian action.

3. From the global transformation of the humanitarian system to the local coordination of EiE

This chapter provides the framework within which our discussion of coordination mechanisms in humanitarian assistance will take place. We shall shed light on three interrelated developments, all of which display characteristics related to the influence of the above-mentioned world cultural processes, the emergence of organizational fields and decoupling tendencies. We shall start with an introduction to EiE and discuss its consolidation at a global level within a large, ever-growing humanitarian system. It is assumed that this growth has brought about challenges resulting in a drive for increased structuring, whose response has been the more or less successful launch of coordination mechanisms such as the cluster approach and the Education Cluster.

3.1 Education in Emergencies: a unique field

Education was designated as a universal human right in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. As an important instrument for reducing poverty and inequality, and as an essential basis for the promotion of democracy and sustained economic growth (World Bank 2017), education should be made accessible to every individual. Unfortunately, this is not the case. According to current statistics, some 75 million children and teenagers from pre-primary school to upper-secondary school age (i.e. 3 to 18 years of age) living in crisis-affected areas of the world lack educational opportunities (Education Cannot Wait 2016: 78). According to a statement of Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, it is extremely important not to lose sight of the needs of populations in countries affected by conflict, natural disasters or refugee situations while implementing goal number four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which

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8 “Education Cannot Wait – Proposing a Fund for education in emergencies” is a report published by the Overseas Development Institute in May 2016 that substantially contributed to the creation of the Education Cannot Wait fund.

9 Statement by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict at the “Informal meeting of the General Assembly to consider ways to advance a comprehensive response to the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis” (19 November 2015)
focuses on “ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting life-long learning”. EiE includes all activities aimed at ensuring access to education in crisis situations and transition phases, meaning that it also focuses on what are termed protracted crises, contexts of long duration and not clearly assignable to a current emergency situation triggered by sudden-onset conflict or natural disaster (Shields/Paulson 2015: 19). The fact that a large number of contemporary crises are protracted poses a problem for EiE in terms of positioning itself as a relevant aspect of humanitarian assistance. This will be discussed in detail further on.

Providing education in an emergency not only contributes to maintaining continuity of children’s learning cycle, but it also fosters psychological, physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection of such individuals. EiE should be considered a lifesaving measure: for children and youth exposed to emerging and protracted crises are often at risk of becoming victims of rape or kidnapping, or of being recruited for participation in criminal activities. Educational activities in such contexts may be formal or informal, providing its recipients with relevant knowledge on the dangers of landmines, for example, or on first-aid prevention measures in case of contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS. From a development perspective education is essential for stability and economic growth of the State (Talbot 2013: 5). From this point of view, education makes an important contribution to peace promotion, State rehabilitation and poverty reduction, and it contributes to the increased ability of a State to cope with challenges related to climate change (Winthrop 2013: 2).

Despite the undeniable importance of education in a world increasingly plagued by crises of various kinds (ALNAP 2016: 7), EiE is faced with challenges, most of which are not new and are inherently related to the very nature of the field. To better understand these challenges, we must take a closer look at two processes seen as central to the emergence of EiE: a) the establishment and acknowledgement of education and EiE as global institutions and b) the transformation of the humanitarian system.

### 3.2 From Education to Education in Emergencies

From a European perspective, the creation of the European Council in 1949, motivated to a large extent by the famous speech of Winston Churchill to academic youth only three years earlier (European Union 2016), can be seen as the starting point for increased attention to education and its inclusion in the international agenda. Education was perceived initially as central not only to socio-economic development, but above all as a means to promote the idea of democracy, the rule of law and human rights across Europe, and to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in democratic decision-making processes.

The pace of the diffusion of education as a global institution has been accelerated by worldwide interconnectivity, resulting from increased communication, economic and political exchanges and interrelated processes of rationalization, professionalization and individualization. Scientific research in
the field of education, as in other areas of society, has generated a wealth of verifiable knowledge concerning the impact of education on the individual.

The launch of the Education for All movement in 1990 by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank in the framework of the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand was only the first in a series of international attempts to ensure access to primary education and reduce the illiteracy rate worldwide (UNESCO 2016).

It is important to highlight in this example the recognizable shift in awareness of the significance of education that has taken place in a remarkably short time. Inter- and non-governmental bodies and expert-knowledge communities, meeting to discuss the future of individuals in various socio-economic contexts and working to solve problems concerning educational systems throughout the world as well as universal rules and conventions condemning any type of discrimination (McNeely, 1995; Chabott 1996): Meyer and Ramirez conclude that interest in educational topics, advocacy for them and implementation of concrete actions have moved beyond national borders, thus demonstrating that education has surpassed its initial function merely as a means to maintain the nation state. These two sociologists even go so far as to describe the emergence of a world educational system (1998: 9).

The fact that today education is a topic that is often discussed in international bodies, many of which are active in the increasingly professionalized humanitarian sector, is highly important when considering populations whose right to education has been denied or suppressed due to their low socio-economic level. This is all the more important since the nature of conflicts has evolved, and new forms of crises and challenges have arisen that put pressure on the international community to take appropriate action (Mendenhall 2014:1; Macrae 2000).

Here again, knowledge from academic research focusing on a lack of education in such environments and the life-saving aspect of such education described earlier has been key to raising awareness on the matter of education in crises and conflict situations and to establishing EiE as a specialized field dealing with that topic. Moreover, UN General Assembly Resolution 64/290 has reaffirmed the importance of EiE (Overseas Development Institute 2015: 20).

Today, EiE may be considered an organizational field in its own right, and while no comprehensive overview of its precise composition has been made until now it is assumed that the great diversity of actors working in the field of EiE is reflected in the number of participants active in its main body of advocacy, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2016). The establishment of the INEE was an outcome of the World Education Forum held in 2000 in Dakar, a follow-up meeting to other world events designed to advocate for increased awareness on education in emergencies10. The

10 These events comprise the mid-decade meeting in Amman, Jordan in 1996 following the Education for All World Conference in 1990, and the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000.
successful consolidation and establishment of the INEE as a global network consisting of more than 12,000 individuals representing international organizations, schools, universities, think-tanks and governments, all striving to facilitate or improve access to education for persons in crises and conflict situations, is truly remarkable in view of the fact that EiE has since its inception continually been confronted with a significant challenge: pressure from the humanitarian system to categorize its activities either in the area of development cooperation or humanitarian action.

3.3 EiE within the changing landscape of humanitarian action

Around 1990, when Education in Emergencies started to receive more attention, what we today refer to as the humanitarian system\textsuperscript{11} was already undergoing a transformation, accompanied by the four processes of rationalization, professionalization, individualization and education that had actually spread across the world and were impacting different domains of social life.

Contrary to popular belief, the provision of humanitarian assistance did not start with Henry Dunant’s experiences in WWI, more specifically the 1863 battle of Solferino, the event that motivated him to establish the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC, however, was the first organization to ask for public recognition of its work. It sought on the one hand to be given a special status as neutral, impartial and independent and on the other to have humanitarian action generally recognized as a domain related to specific professions, such as medicine or logistics. By that, we can observe some early attempts to institutionalize delivery of humanitarian assistance (Krause 2014: 103).

The 20\textsuperscript{th} century, characterized by two world wars and then the Cold War, saw a significant increase in the number of organized entities established to deliver assistance to affected populations. As mentioned in the theoretical section of this paper, and as shown by Boli and Thomas\textsuperscript{12}, the emergence of organized structures correlates with the prevalence of situations characterized by or triggering insecurity and uncertainty.

\textsuperscript{11} While some authors use the term “humanitarian action” to refer to the provision of humanitarian relief activities solely in emergency situations, others use it to describe a wider range of activities comprising the promotion of “human rights, access to medicine, economic development, democracy promotion, and building responsible states” (Barnett 2005: 723). For reasons of simplicity, in the context of this paper the humanitarian field or humanitarian system can be considered a space in which all actors focusing on reducing suffering due to emergencies and for development reasons come together for a common purpose. Terms such as humanitarian assistance, humanitarian response, humanitarian aid, humanitarian action and relief aid will be used for activities related to the immediate alleviation of suffering. The ALNAP Report on the State of the Humanitarian System 2015 uses the term “system” in an organic rather than mechanical sense to define a complex interrelated whole, a network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian assistance is provided when local and national resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population (18).

\textsuperscript{12} Boli/Thomas (1999) investigated growth or shrinking tendency of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) between 1875 and 1973 and found that these strongly correlated with the current world situation (which they categorized as either characterized by major events such as a world war or as undergoing phases of security and stability (1999: 177f.).
While several private humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children were created in the aftermath of WWI (Barnett 2011: 2), a remarkable increase in the number of humanitarian organizations was registered especially after WWII (many focusing on the reconstruction of Europe) and at the beginning of decolonialization. Although one cannot assume that it was with the establishment of the United Nations and its funds and programmes after WWII that the number of humanitarian organizations rose, it can be assumed that the advent of the UN system was crucial for humanitarian action to reach global authority.

Humanitarian actors providing emergency assistance were soon joined by another group of actors: those engaged in development activities (e.g. the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1966)\textsuperscript{13}.

While at that time one could not consider humanitarian assistance as part of a system let alone an organizational field according to Di Maggio/Powell’s broad definition (Barnett 2005: 725), the situation changed with the end of the Cold War.

The post-war period has been shaped by new types of crises such as intra-State wars, and at the same time the focus of attention has shifted from nation states to civil society. The breakdown of the bipolar world order, the resulting lack of a supranational entity functioning as a global authority and nation states overwhelmed by events that exceed their control capacity have required intense involvement by humanitarian actors to ensure the well-being of affected populations.

The genocide in Rwanda, conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the crisis in East Timor are just a few examples of the new complex nature of humanitarian crises. Such events have created complex humanitarian emergency situations and confronted the world with hitherto unknown challenges.

As the number and variety of humanitarian actors and crises increased it was necessary to rethink and develop innovative approaches to improving existing security structures as well as prevention and conflict management mechanisms. This, in addition to the promotion of short-term emergency response. The result was increasing collaboration between actors focusing on long-term activities of development with entities providing emergency assistance.

The growing realization that countries must ensure the well-being of their citizens (Novelli 2010: 454) can be seen as a side-effect of a transnational individualization process.

\textsuperscript{13} The world’s first development aid agency was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), established in 1943, the forerunner of UNICEF and UNHCR (Pillars of Peace: 1946). It was active for only three years, and during that time provided substantial relief assistance (i.e. food, clothing and shelter, medical assistance) specifically to populations affected by starvation, displacement and political insurgencies in the context of WWII (Browne 1997: 3).
With an increasing number of crises, these actors relied more and more on external entities for their financial resources. States sought to strengthen their position in the world and were increasingly willing to get involved in relief assistance and fund operations with an eye to furthering their strategic and foreign policy goals (Barnett 2005: 726).

The creation of specific units within ministries designed to manage international development activities and the simultaneous increase of standards, codes of conduct, processes and strategies are all proof of a growing professionalization within the humanitarian system (Barnett 2005: 723). According to Meyer/Rowan’s notion that organizations adapt their formal structures to comply with expectations imposed by their environment in order to increase their credibility and legitimization (1977: 340), this increased structuring made sense as a way to respond to rising quality expectations by important stakeholders (e.g. donors) (Barnett 2005: 725).

Another phenomenon related to the professionalization of the humanitarian system was the increased linkage of existing professions (such as medicine or nutritional science) with international development as well as the creation of specialized areas of intervention within the larger system of humanitarian response. Among these: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) or, what is of particular interest in the context of this paper, EiE.

Recapitulation I

The effects of education when provided as part of immediate humanitarian response have both short- and long-term impact on the affected population. Despite tireless advocacy efforts made since the establishment of the field of EiE, it continues to be chronically underprioritized and underfunded: In 2014, at 7.9% the level of official development assistance (ODA) for EiE was lower than two years before when it was at 8.4% (Global Partnership for Education 2016).

One of the main reasons for this low prioritization is that donors often fail to recognize the relevance of EiE as an essential part of immediate humanitarian assistance and consider it as a development measure (UNESCO 2011: 172 – 175; Brannelly/Ndaruhutse/Rigaud 2009: 68 – 71, cit. in: Talbot 2013: 8).

While there was a time when the nature of prevailing crises such as intra-State wars and natural disasters allowed for a smooth transition between humanitarian and development activities\(^\text{14}\), the complex nature of crises emerging after the Cold War and an increase in the number of protracted crises complicate the question of where emergency assistance should stop and reconstruction and development activities should begin. The coordination problem that occurs between the moment when a humanitarian organization withdraws from a context and the moment when development entities take up their work

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\(^\text{14}\) This situation is referred to as ‘‘relief-development continuum’’ (Sinclair 2002; Munslow/Brown 1999, cit. in Mendenhall 2014: 1)
has been known for more than twenty years, and is termed as the relief-development gap (Emmott 2002; Suveiu 2006).

As the consolidation of the humanitarian system has led to increased collaboration and even overlaps in a variety of areas\(^\text{15}\) it is surprising that humanitarian aid and development cooperation are still being dealt with as separate areas, whereas a merging of the two might make sense in terms of better efficiency.

From the perspective of sociological neo-institutionalism, the dual nature of EiE can be fully justified: an argument for the immediate provision of EiE can be made by referring to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which all individuals, regardless of their life situations, shall have access to education. Through the promotion of physical, psychical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, EiE has a life-saving character and contributes to the well-being and development of individuals (which is related to increased individualization).

Furthermore, education is an important way for other areas of humanitarian assistance, such as nutrition, health or security, to generate and disseminate expert knowledge. From a development perspective education is, as mentioned, indispensable for the socio-economic progress of a society (Talbot 2013: 5) and delivers important value for peace promotion and poverty reduction (Winthrop 2013: 2). The pursuit of progress can be seen as a result of an increasing professionalization and rationalization.

Given the fact that a large number of today’s humanitarian crises are of a protracted nature\(^\text{16}\) an approach such as the one taken by EiE, covering both humanitarian needs in the short term and development needs in the longer term, is theoretically in a good position to meet both needs. In fact, it might even serve as the model for a more integrative approach within the humanitarian system, with the objective of breaking down the imagined boundaries between humanitarian aid and development assistance.

Today, the humanitarian system includes a vast number and variety of actors: local, national and international NGOs, UN humanitarian agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donors, recipient government agencies, and humanitarian departments of intergovernmental organizations – all working towards the complex goal of reducing humanitarian suffering across the world (ALNAP 2015: 19).

Many of these actors can be found in the INEE’s members’ list, which shows a willingness to engage in or at least support EiE. Major entities such as UNICEF that have managed to build a solid reputation at the global level include EiE as part of their core activities. This should, given the fact that they engage

\(^\text{15}\) For example, human rights, peace promotion, economic development, democracy promotion (Barnett 2005: 723; cinfo 2017)

\(^\text{16}\) As stated by UNICEF (2015), 90% of humanitarian crises registered in the 21st century involved civil war.
in both humanitarian assistance and development activities, give EiE better visibility, more relevance and legitimization.

Despite EiE having achieved attention at a global level and being discussed by important actors at the international level (starting within the INEE network), understanding of its importance and role at the national and local level is often lacking, even within entities supposedly engaged in the provision of EiE. This is an observation highlighted in various discussions conducted with education professionals within the framework of this study, who consider the understanding and willingness of the different stakeholders to work towards the implementation of EiE as a prerequisite for achieving results.

Related to this, the perceived dichotomy of the EiE’s mandate by EiE critics also has an effect on the coordination of related activities, which are mainly managed by the Education Cluster. As will be seen in the next chapter, coordination of humanitarian action alone has been questioned multiple times. The introduction of the cluster approach has been an attempt to overcome mistakes experienced and coordinate humanitarian action more effectively.

3.4 Introducing the Education Cluster

OCHA, the Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Project, the NGO Coordination Resource Centre… the ever-growing humanitarian system and the evolving nature of humanitarian crises have given rise to various attempts in the past aimed at structuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance. These have functioned with more or less success. In the following section, the emergence of such coordination mechanisms will be discussed, with special emphasis on the Education Cluster, which was established as part of the cluster approach to coordinate EiE.

3.4.1 Coordination challenges: what now?

“*The system was characterised by a hollow core. Far from having a strong capacity at the centre to provide leadership and overall coordination to a system involving not just eight UN agencies, but donor organisation teams, military and civil defence contingents, government agencies and over two hundred NGOs involved in the response during 1994, the centre was weak, poorly resourced and lacking in organisational clarity.*” *(Borton 1996, cit. in Reindorp/Whiles 2001)*

The growth and institutionalization of the humanitarian system yielded benefits such as increased awareness of the relevance of humanitarian affairs on the international stage and the emergence of professionalized entities with the means and human resources capacity to deploy staff to deliver relief activities round the clock. But this very growth turned out to be quite problematic, especially in the wake of the Cold War, where a profusion of aid agencies with similar mandates for areas of the world in need of assistance (Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia being two good examples (Minear et al. 1994)) generated more confusion and chaos than improvement in the situation on the ground.

The statement at the beginning of this chapter provides a realistic view of the uncoordinated response in the context of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. In every humanitarian emergency, a lack of
coordination is considered problematic because it is associated with gaps, overlaps and lack of information among the deployed actors, relevant national authorities and the suffering population (Barnett 2005: 725). Also, it puts into question the reliability and legitimacy of humanitarian actors, something that can have serious consequences such as a reduction in funding by donors.

As mentioned before, coordination problems were common in a variety of crises in the 1990s, even though by 1991 the United Nations had already attempted to remedy the situation: through the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 46/182 designed to strengthen coordination of humanitarian affairs by UN organizations. To this end special functions and entities such as the Emergency Humanitarian Coordinator (EHC)\textsuperscript{17}, IASC and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA, renamed OCHA in 1994)\textsuperscript{18} were created (OCHA 2016).

With a similar objective in mind, the Sphere Project was launched by a number of NGOs and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Its aim is to improve the quality of humanitarian response by setting standards for the implementation of humanitarian work (The Sphere Project 2016).

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) was initiated in 2010\textsuperscript{19} in response to a suspicion that humanitarian organizations were more concerned with being accountable to donors than to beneficiaries and that the latter were not receiving the sort of assistance they were specifically in need of (CHS Alliance 2016). Increasing standardization, one of the four world cultural processes, is generally considered efficiency-enhancing.

HAP includes a set of principles to which humanitarian actors must subscribe as well as a self-evaluation mechanism, and it specifically stresses the importance of involving beneficiaries of assistance in planning and needs assessment (Krause 2014: 140).

Despite the fact that the 1990s were characterised by increasing efforts to systematize delivery of humanitarian response, events such as the refugee crisis in Darfur in 2003 and 2004 and the tsunami in the Indian Ocean that same year were both glaring demonstrations of inept deployment of humanitarian actors and an absence of efficient coordination between entities.

It should be borne in mind that while the field of humanitarian action was expanding it was also becoming more professional (Krause 2014: 107f.). At the same time, other areas of social life, such as politics, economics and education, were undergoing similar processes while experiencing challenges.

\textsuperscript{17} The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) is in charge of coordinating and facilitating humanitarian assistance.

\textsuperscript{18} OCHA is part of the UN Secretariat and responsible for the overall coordination of humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

\textsuperscript{19} In 2015 HAP International and People in Aid were merged into the Geneva-based “CHS Alliance”, a platform aiming to support the humanitarian sector in improving the quality and effectiveness of their response via the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).
Among these: system-external influences owing to an ever-changing world. As theorized by Luhmann, the humanitarian system interacts with other social fields and is dependent on developments specific to those fields (Luhmann 1995). As such, it is not independent, but, as suggested by Meyer/Rowan, linked with other systems (1977). With the advent of the world society and processes related to it, the problems of how to cope with its ever-changing, interconnected nature were exacerbated, thereby resulting in a greater urge for systematization and structuring.

On the one hand, organizations attempt to systematize, on the other, and depending on system-external influences and changes, one might ask how much rationalization and standardization is really effective in such a volatile field.

3.4.2 EiE and the Cluster Approach

Following the failure of the humanitarian community to efficiently respond to the crises of the 1990s and early 21st century, a reform of humanitarian coordination was undertaken aiming to ensure a more effective humanitarian response by increasing predictability (financially and in terms of leading the response), accountability with respect to affected populations and partnership between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors (Education Cluster Coordinator Handbook 2010: 2f.).

The introduction of the cluster approach as a new coordination mechanism was part of the Humanitarian Reform Agenda. Clusters are groups of organizations, both UN and non-UN, established in the main sectors of humanitarian action (e.g. Health, Nutrition, WASH). To date, nine clusters have been established in what are termed ‘response areas’\(^{20}\). In addition, two service clusters in the areas of telecommunication and logistics have been created to facilitate and support the emergency response activities of humanitarian organizations (Steets et al. 2010: 25).

As defined by UNGA Resolution 46/182 (1991)\(^{21}\) each government has the main responsibility to ensure the security and well-being of its nationals. Clusters are thus introduced per request from governments, whose national response and coordination capacities are overwhelmed and unable to respond properly to needs arising from sudden-onset or ongoing emergencies, both conflict- or natural-disaster-related.

Clusters are primarily designed to support, not replace, the work of national authorities and coordination mechanisms. Thus, a successful emergency response presupposes a good working relationship between clusters and the authorities and a commitment by the latter to collaborate and accept international involvement.

\(^{20}\) Clusters and Lead agencies: Agriculture (FAO), Camp Coordination and Management (UNHCR / IOM), Early Recovery (UNDP), Education (UNICEF, Save the Children), Emergency Shelter (UNHCR, IFRC), Health (WHO), Nutrition (UNICEF), Protection (UNHCR) and WASH (UNICEF)

\(^{21}\) The UNGA Resolution 46/182 deals with the topic of coordination of humanitarian assistance through the United Nations. According to it, each government ‘‘has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory’’.
On a global level the coordination of each cluster is performed by what are known as lead agencies, which in almost all cases are UN entities. One exception is the Education Cluster, which is jointly led by one UN organization (UNICEF), and one NGO (Save the Children). The Global Education Cluster directs and oversees the work of the different education clusters at country-level (Education Cluster Coordinator Handbook 2010: 22).

The Education Cluster was established in 2007 after a long and tedious process and tireless advocacy efforts. One of the main reasons was that EiE, unlike shelter, nutrition, health, inter alia, was not considered a life-saving domain. On the basis of a statement made by one of the interviewees for this study for some people the view continues to be that “Education Cannot Wait, but it’s not a priority either”.

Currently, there are 15 formally activated Education Clusters, eight of which are located in Africa. To date, over 42 Education Clusters have been established at country level (The Global Education Cluster 2016).

At the national level, Education Clusters can be either co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children (or any other designated lead agency), led by a single agency with the other assuming support activities or, wherever possible, co-led by the Ministry of Education. The latter situation is ideal of course because it presupposes strong interest and involvement from national authorities, which is desirable insofar as a cluster is merely a temporary mechanism which is eventually to be integrated into existing coordination structures (Education Cluster Coordinator Handbook 2010: 38f.).

The functioning of an Education Cluster depends on the scale of the emergency it is operating in. While for L-3 (United Nations 2016)22 and high-priority emergency clusters capacity might be stretched to the limit and more global support required23, in other countries clusters are able to operate with available resources (The Global Education Cluster 2016).

Besides the inclusion of national and local authorities and other entities working on education24, it is important to also involve the affected population and a number of other humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors (e.g. community-based organizations (CBOs), diaspora groups, etc.) in the planning, coordination of clusters and implementation of activities at the national and local level (Papadopoulos 2010: 5).

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22 The UN classifies the most severe, large-scale humanitarian crises as L-3 (Level 3).

23 This might result in providing technical support and the possible deployment of additional staff, such as Rapid Response Team (RRT) members. The RRT pool consists of EiE specialists who are rapidly deployable (at a minimum of 48 hours’ notice) to support education coordination emergency situations.

24 These are also called “members” or “partners” and can include international and local organizations, NGOs, teachers’ unions, education personnel, etc.
In some countries clusters are established at sub-national level as well. Whereas the work of clusters at the national level is more strategic and aimed at bringing partners together and ensuring collaboration with national authorities and other clusters, the work of the cluster at the sub-national level focuses on planning, coordination and implementation of education-related activities while seeking interaction with local authorities, coordination mechanisms and partners (Steets et al. 2010: 26; 46). Sub-national clusters are in place in both countries investigated in the context of this paper.

A cluster’s life-cycle consists of three phases: activation, transition, and deactivation. As part of the IASC Transformative Agenda, criteria to activate a cluster or to move to the next phase were reviewed in 2011 following the observation that this process, as defined earlier, had become too complex and was not showing expected results (IASC 2015: 5).

Whether the current process is more efficient remains a relative assessment, considering the fact that the establishment of a cluster currently involves eight steps and involves, besides the aforementioned cluster lead agencies and humanitarian coordination actors (HC/RC), several other actors such as OCHA, national authorities and their counterparts, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)25.

The structure of an education cluster can take two forms depending on the current situation in a country and coordination structures already in place: 1) In countries where a government claims responsibility for and possesses the capacity to conduct an emergency response, often government-led Education Sector Working Groups (ESWG) are already in place. In such cases, the Education Cluster would be established as a supporting sub-group of the ESWG, and could later be merged into an EiE unit or an emergency unit within the Ministry of Education (MoE). This model is more prevalent in the case of natural disasters or in countries where the government is reluctant to accept the support of an education cluster as a separate, external unit.

In contexts where a government’s capacity to manage a crisis is low, the government is overwhelmed by a situation, or, in the case of conflict-situations, risks siding with one party or the other, it is recommended that a cluster be established as 2) a separate entity termed a Working Group (WG) in order for it to maintain its neutrality and independence. In such cases, the idea would not be to integrate the cluster into existing Education Working Groups, but for it to remain a separate entity overlapping only in defined key areas (see Education Coordination Handbook 2010: 48). While in the case of Mali one can speak of an Education Cluster, this structure is termed an ‘Education Working Group’ in Nigeria, following to a decision by the Nigerian government not to introduce any clusters into the country, fearing this would classify it as a ‘failed state’. More information will be provided when turning to the case of Nigeria later in this paper.

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Recapitulation II

In order to respond to increased demands and make humanitarian action more efficient, different reform initiatives have been launched as a means to standardize and facilitate coordination and collaboration among actors involved.

The initiatives described earlier, aimed at improving coordination within the humanitarian system, demonstrated that substantial improvement has not been achieved, or that contemporary coordination mechanisms have been faced with unexpected challenges.

Increasingly aware of the benefits of emergency education and, at the same time, challenged by the growing number of actors and complexity within the EiE field, the urge for a coordination mechanism designed to fill capacity gaps and ensure timely and efficient response arose. As a consequence, a cluster specifically dedicated to EiE was created in 2007, after long and persistent advocacy by EiE proponents (INEE 2016).

One of the main reasons for not having recognized education as a main cluster of humanitarian response at the beginning was that with UNICEF, the education sector already had an established coordination lead with strategic, operational and human-resource capacity. Another, probably more powerful reason was the fact that emergency education was, as already mentioned above, not prioritized as a key area of humanitarian action (Anderson/Hodgkin 2011: 2).

Despite the field’s having reached attention at a global level and being discussed by notable actors on the international stage (starting within the INEE network), understanding of the importance and role of EiE at the national and local level is often lacking. This is an observation highlighted in different discussions conducted with Education professionals in the framework of this study, who consider the understanding and willingness of different stakeholders to work towards the implementation of EiE as a prerequisite for achieving results.

Since the advent of the cluster approach, two independent evaluations have been conducted (The Cluster Approach Evaluations (CAE) 2007 and 2010), drawing conclusions and recommendations for the different clusters at the global and national level. Recent reports on the cluster approach, some general and some focusing on a specific sector, show that many of the challenges identified early on still exist. This begs the question: to what extent clusters are able to perform according to a planned scheme/strategic plan and what triggers an implementation of practical activities that deviate from an agreed upon structure. The emergency education sector is also confronted with challenges related to its very nature: large gaps can be found at global and country-level and are related to human resources, technical capacity and financial resources. According to the INEE, these challenges are the result of ‘‘a lack of human resource capacities and mechanisms for preparedness, response and coordination not keeping pace with the increasing prioritization of education within humanitarian emergencies, as well
The number of actors and the variety of approaches, lack of standardization, and gaps in increasingly important technical areas” (INEE 2016).

The question of efficiency of coordination mechanisms presents itself. Coordination mechanisms are created to respond to a lack of structure in the provision of humanitarian action. At the same time, society expects increased formalization, which creates necessary legitimization and credibility. These expectations are based on institutional rules and guidelines shaped by society and the institutional environment, which is constantly evolving and requires adaptation of formal structures. However, the same is not necessarily the case in terms of practical implementation (Rowan/Meyer 1977). Decoupling can be expected to be wider in the humanitarian sector, which is confronted by various in- and external factors influencing implementation of activities. Thus, while in theory it is expected that the cluster approach as a coordination mechanism brings about improvement, in reality, it encounters several challenges stemming from both its internal structure and external environment. Even after continual advocacy efforts to be included as part of immediate response and integrated within the cluster approach, EiE is still relegated an involuntary outsider role.

Given the fact that many of the challenges the Education Cluster encountered some years ago still prevail, one might ask how adequate it is for it to align coordination activities (that might be somewhat different from others, again, due to its nature) to a mechanism established at the global level and standardized in a way almost everyone can adopt.

The study of two cases, Mali and Nigeria will examine this question in detail.

4. Case studies

The core research question of this paper will be investigated through two case studies describing the work of the Education Clusters in Mali and the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria. Before getting to the case studies, some background information on the methodological approach used to collect data will be provided. In the very final section of this chapter, results obtained during the investigation of the two cases will be compared and a preliminary analysis with respect to the research question will be presented.

4.1 Case selection

The idea to examine two cases instead of one – which was the plan initially – resulted from the assumption that investigating the prevalence of internal and external factors in two different cases would allow a more reliable conclusion on whether reasons for a deviating implementation of the cluster approach might be attributed rather to internal, structural elements or to external, context-specific factors.
Mali and Nigeria are both located in the Sahel, a desert region prone to various challenges, including: extreme poverty, climate change, armed conflict and insecurity. Both countries have in the last five years experienced waves of unrest, mostly resulting from the political situation, claims for territory and the rise of different armed groups, all of this overshadowed by a spread of violent extremist groups. Both countries are thus complex contexts for humanitarian actors to work in. The Education Cluster in Mali and the Working Group in Nigeria were both established in 2012. In both cases the cluster structure is sub-divided into Working Groups at the national and regional levels.

Beside the fact that the in-country situations in Mali and Nigeria make these countries interesting cases to investigate education response, the availability of resource persons, mainly recommended by the Global Education Cluster in Geneva, was a decisive factor in choosing these cases.

Both cases follow the same structure and start with background information necessary to understand the context within which humanitarian actors implement EiE activities. What follows then is a description of how Education Cluster structures were established and operate in these contexts. Each case study concludes with a highlighting of main challenges and potential of respective coordination mechanisms.

4.2 Methodology

The investigation of internal and external factors that might influence the implementation of practical activities of the Education Clusters in Mali and Nigeria was conducted in two phases: document analysis (Phase I) and the expert interviews (Phase II).

A thorough document analysis was considered an adequate way to identify factors exercising an influence over the implementation of the Education Cluster’s activities in general.

It was assumed that most information on the implementation of the cluster approach in general, and, specifically, the Education Cluster, would be found in the format of strategy documents, internal and external reviews, project proposals, progress reports and evaluations. These were collected via a keyword-based online research. An overview of documents used in the framework of this study is provided in the bibliography.

During the review of these documents, special attention was paid to text passages indicating an unexpected turn of events or failure in the implementation of activities, attributable to a lack of human,

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26 As interviewees stated the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria actually function the same way as Clusters. This is why the term “Education Cluster structures” includes in the framework of this paper both the Education Clusters in Mali and the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria.

27 Documents deemed relevant were found by looking for the following keywords in changing order and combination: Education / Cluster / Education in Emergencies / report / review / evaluation / analysis / recommendations / implementation / Mali / Nigeria. A complete list of the strategy documents, internal and external reviews, project proposals and progress reports and evaluations considered for this study can be found in the bibliography.
material or financial resources, unexpected incidents that made it necessary to adapt a strategy or activity plans, or any other kind of difficulties and challenges encountered during the reporting period.

These relevant text passages were integrated into a category system or, as it is termed in this paper, a *catalogue of internal and external factors* that was developed in parallel with the document review and functioned in a similar way as do codebooks for content analysis. Following a personal interpretation, the essence of these text passages was deductively condensed into a single umbrella term (factor). In a subsequent stage, different examples of how a specific factor might manifest itself (according to the examples provided in the literature reviewed) were noted.

The range of factors identified and categorized as internal or external, following the definition provided in the introduction of this study, showed that these factors could again be classified in five broad categories: context (factors related to the political, economic and humanitarian in-country situation), advocacy (prevalence of activities aimed at fostering the understanding on the importance of EiE and for which the entire EiE field, not just Education Clusters, are responsible), management (mainly related to the set-up of the cluster and includes for example HR capacity at disposal for management and coordination of the cluster), implementation (of cluster work activities) and working environment (relating to entities involved in the cluster’s activities from education partner to community-based organizations (CBOs). The detailed catalogue of internal and external factors can be found in the annex.

These categories were useful to design the structure of *expert interviews (Phase II)* conducted in order to verify the prevalence of these factors in the cases of Mali and Nigeria.

An important criterion for the selection of interview partners was their experience with the work of the Education Cluster in one of the two countries. Initial contacts were facilitated by the Global Education Cluster; after the first interview, however, the identification of new resource persons happened naturally. Interviews were conducted via Skype with a total of ten people who had served, or still serve, as Education Cluster Coordinators, Co-cluster coordinators or Information Managers (IM) in the contexts of Mali and Nigeria.

Interview guidelines were developed as per the catalogue of factors created in Phase I of this investigation and consisted of four question blocks. The idea was to let interviewees, after a brief

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28 In order to have various perspectives on the Education Cluster’s performance, it was first deemed important to talk with various people engaged in the response, both internal and external to the cluster. During the interviews, however, I experienced that my conversation partners were willing and able to take a distant view from their function within the cluster and reflect critically about the functionality and necessity of the education cluster’s work.

29 The first block focused on contextual elements such as the function of the interviewee, composition of the cluster in Mali/Nigeria at the time of deployment and in-country situation. Following to that, participants were asked to share their opinion on which internal and external factors impacted the education response at that specific time. In a next step, the catalogue of factors came into play; interviewees were asked to share their view on the prevalence of those factors they had not come up with themselves. In the last section, participants were asked to put themselves in a prospective position and reflect on how the education cluster’s work could be improved, and from a more distanced view, whether they
introduction, first share their experience working with the Education Clusters in Mali and EiE Working Groups in Nigeria, and in a second stage delve into the internal and external factors they believed were important influences for the practical implementation of work activities. In a third stage, the factors they mentioned were contrasted with those compiled in the catalogue in order to see whether the latter contained other factors interviewees had not considered, but were equally important.

The essence of these interviews was processed in the sections providing background information on the functioning of Education Clusters in Mali and EiE Working Groups in Nigeria, in the sub-chapters discussing the prevalence of internal and external factors and in the concluding sections of this paper. Quotes and statements were portrayed on an anonymous basis. Interview guidelines can be found in the annex.

The methods applied were designed to identify patterns across the two cases, but also involved case-specific influences concerning the education response in Mali and Nigeria. It was also considered important to determine the roots of influential factors, which could trigger a decoupling in the practical implementation of activities from a predefined formal structure.

If the analysis of data shows that the cluster implements all its activities as required by its formal structure (i.e. according to guidelines supposed to lead its action) and that factors influencing its work are mainly context-specific (hypothesis 1b), we can conclude that the level of decoupling from formal structures is low (or non-existent) and the cluster as coordination mechanism functions well (according to any pre-defined purposes it is supposed to fill). However, such a conclusion is too simplistic and clouds the actual success, necessity, or suitability of the education cluster.

If the analysis of data shows the opposite, i.e. that a (strong) decoupling of activities mainly results from a non-implementation of activities as defined in the cluster’s formal structure (hypothesis 1a), the cluster as coordination mechanism cannot be considered adequate or well-functioning. To conclude from this that the Education Cluster is not an adequate mechanism and therefore to scrutinize the Education Cluster, or the cluster approach as a whole, would be too simplistic.

In the following chapters covering the two case studies, the prevalence of influencing internal and external factors, and their impact, will be described. In the discussion and conclusion section findings from the case studies will be analysed with respect to the central research question.

thought the cluster approach was a suitable mechanism to coordinate humanitarian action. More information on interview guidelines and interview partners is shared in the annex.

Contrary to my initial intention, I decided not to grade the prevalence of each factor according to a specific weighting criteria. Reasons were the relatively small number of documents reviewed for the identification of factors and secondly the fact that most of the factors identified were relating to processes rather than outcomes. Thus, it was assumed that a scaling would not represent the intensity of the decoupling significantly.
Although results from this research are hardly generalizable, instruments developed for this investigation (catalogue of factors, interview guidelines) might offer ways to get a better grasp of challenges in the implementation of Education Cluster activities and help draw attention to factors that could be better mastered in order to improve a cluster’s performance.

4.3 Case I: The Education Cluster in Mali

4.3.1 Introduction

The current situation in Mali, a former French colony that gained its independence in 1960, has in the past five years been dominated by a complex conflict that has its roots in a fight for Mali’s northern territory. Different actors involved in the conflict and other factors such as increasing desertification and droughts, malnutrition, diseases and an upsurge of violence have fostered destabilization in the country and caused major displacements of populations. An overview of the causes leading to the dire humanitarian situation in the country to date is provided below.

4.3.1.1 Country profile

Mali is a semi-presidential republic in West Africa and the eighth-largest country of the African continent. It is landlocked and surrounded by the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria to the north, the Republic of Niger to east, the Republic of Senegal and Mauritania to the west, the Republic of Guinea to the southwest and the republics of Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast to the south. Mali is sub-divided into eight regions, each under the authority of an elected governor. The administrative structure of Mali further divides each of these regions into five to nine districts (or cercles), which are divided into communes. Those again, are separated into villages or quarters (The World Factbook 2016). Out of an estimated 15 million people living in Mali, around one-third have settled in urban areas; however, due to a high population growth rate and internal displacement stemming from conflict, poverty, and malnutrition, the actual number may be higher. The population of Mali comprises various ethnic and racial groups, with Islam being the religion of approximately 90% of the country's inhabitants (Africa W 2017). Although Mali is rich in natural resources (The World Factbook 2016), this mainly desert country is plagued by a poverty rate of approximately 45%, making it one of the poorest countries in Africa.

4.3.1.2 The conflict in Mali

‘‘Mali: the world’s most dangerous peacekeeping mission’’ (United Nations 2017)

The resurgence of the conflict in Mali in late 2011 (BBC 2013) has considerably impacted the current political and socio-economic situation of this deeply divided nation. A rebellion of the Tuaregs, Mali’s ethnic minority, is at the root of the conflict. The Tuaregs, descendants of the Berbers, principally inhabit the Sahara Desert, a region stretching from southwestern Libya to southern Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso and Northern Mali (Shoup 2011: 295). Dissatisfied with their lives, characterized by poverty, malnutrition and under-development, and feeling marginalized by the Malian Government in the more
prosperous South, the Tuaregs started an independence movement to oppose it (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect 2016). Their primary objective was to improve the life of their people by establishing an independent State in the Sahara, known as Azawad (Al Jazeera Documentary 2014). They were joined in their rebellion by smaller Al-Qaeda-affiliated or various smaller splinter groups of Al Qaeda, who saw this uprising by Tuareg rebels as an opening for them to fight for their own vision - creation of an Islamic Emirate in the Sahara under Sharia law.

As a response to the uprising, and in order to stop the secular Tuareg rebels and Islamist groups from moving southwards, the Malian military tried to step in, but it was defeated. And displeased with the handling of the military response in the Tuareg rebellion, Southern Mali soldiers organized a coup d’état and suspended the constitution of Mali. In the meantime, Mali’s three largest northern regions, Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, were overrun by Tuareg separatists and Islamic fighters. While the latter promptly managed to seize Timbuktu for the Tuaregs, Tuareg separatists gathered at Gao, the largest city in northern Mali, where they proclaimed Azawad as a new Saharan State independent of Mali. However, satisfaction over this victory did not last long: for the Tuaregs represent only one of many tribes in northern Mali, and while they are the largest tribe in the Sahara, there are various others: for example, in Gao, where groups observed developments warily. Although close to their objective, the Tuareg fighters did not have a clear idea of how to ensure the security of the population and to foster development.

At the same time, they were threatened by Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist groups trying to spread further across northern Mali and impose their ideologies in Tuareg-conquered territory. At their vanguard was a tribal army known as the “Movement for Unity and Djihad in West Africa” (MUJAO) (BBC 2013). The complexity of the Malian conflict is well-mirrored in interregional insurgencies and power struggles that risk degenerating into complete disintegration of the Malian State under the control of rebel groups (Cyrill 2013).

In order to prevent such a situation and to regain control over the North, the Malian government, under their new democratically elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, requested international assistance in 2013. After having received authorization by a UN Security Council resolution (Al Jazeera 2013), the French military, assisted by other actors, helped the Malian military recover northern territory held by the Islamists in September 2013 (Al Jazeera 2015).

Ever since that time, various attempts to seal a peace deal were made between the Tuareg rebels and the Government. However, only the most recent one, the Algiers Accord of June 2015, initially seemed promising (BBC 2015). Among other things, the parties agreed upon new security plans and

31 At that time, it was said that the five main Islamist groups: Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Signed-in-Blood Battalion and the Islamic Movement for Azawad (IMA), and the MUJAO, an AQIM splinter group.
development measures for the Azawad region. Although not giving it full autonomy, as the Tuaregs had hoped for, the Government promised to devolve more authority to the region (MENASTREAM 2016).

4.3.1.3 The humanitarian situation in Mali

Despite efforts to end the conflict and promote peace and development in Mali, the country – especially its northern regions – continues to be fragile and a target for armed attacks, banditry and insecurity. Attempts to establish interim authorities in the northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu have been hindered by clashes between signatories of the Algiers Peace Agreement in 2016 (Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2016). In the wake of its signing there has been an increase in the number of more complex attacks, most of them carried out by AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO, often targeting the Malian Government, bases of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and neutral peacekeepers (HRW 2016). These incidents expose civilians to human rights violations and abuses, and hamper their access to basic social needs (OCHA 2016: 5). Furthermore, Mali faces environmental problems such as deforestation, soil erosion, land and water pollution, resulting in a lack of potable water and outbreaks of diseases (Africa W 2017). Increasing desertification and droughts have caused severe food insecurity and unemployment, and have added to large-scale displacement of populations, generally from rural to urban areas (The World Factbook 2016). According to the OCHA-published overview of humanitarian needs and requirements (HNRO) for the Sahel in 2017, more than 37,000 persons in Mali remain internally displaced, almost 700,000 children and pregnant and lactating women need nutritional assistance and 1.2 million people need water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. Based on the figures, Mali is one of the most severely affected among the Sahel countries monitored for this report (OCHA 2017: 2). By the end of 2016, approximately 3.7 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. However, difficult access to certain regions and a security vacuum has hampered the work of humanitarian aid workers working under a risk of being attacked and robbed by armed bandits. Especially affected are the regions of northern Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. According to ACAPS, the situation in Mali is likely to deteriorate in 2017, mainly due to two probable occurrences: 1) the collapse of the tenuous peace deal between the Malian government and main armed groups, which would result in conflict throughout the northern regions and, even more likely, 2) the further expansion of Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine (emboldened by regional insecurity), resulting in an increase in attacks. It is feared that these will continue to target schools and displacement camps among other things. Both events may trigger large-scale displacement, increased food insecurity, human rights violations and the closing of schools (ACAPS 2016: 25f.).

33 These include: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad. (OCHA 2017)
Although special emphasis in terms of humanitarian assistance is placed on the northern and central regions of Mali – given that these are the regions hit the hardest by the conflict – it should be noted that food insecurity, malnutrition and flooding also affect populations in the southern part of the country. These populations were also included in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for 2017 (OCHA 2017: 11).

**Illustration 1: Humanitarian Needs Overview Mali 2017**

### 4.3.2 Coordinating EiE in Mali

As outlined in the previous chapter, the precarious situation in Mali necessitates the continuation of EiE activities. After providing an overview on the EiE community’s priorities for the current year, light will be shed on the work of the Education cluster in Mali. Following an introduction of how this cluster was created and functions, the focus of this sub-chapter will be on factors that were, via document analysis and interviews, identified as influential for the work of the Education Cluster.

#### 4.3.2.1 Priorities for 2017

The conflict and resulting security situation in Mali has, as described in the previous chapter, had a major impact on educational activities. The expected evolution of the situation throughout the course of 2017 leaves little room for an immediate improvement of the situation, thus making the work of institutions trying to enable the provision of education even more difficult. Approximately 220,000 persons are in need of education, and although access to it had improved by the end of 2015, the number of schools shut down in 65 communities in northern and central Mali rose from 282 by the end of 2015 to 296 in May 2016. Furthermore, the precarious security situation causes teachers to shy away from...
involvement there. Open schools are reported to be lacking community engagement, infrastructure, school cafeterias, and security measures (OCHA 2016:10).

The coordination of EiE activities is managed by the Education Cluster, established at the request of the former Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos, to IASC Principals in May 2012. The Education Cluster was created following the establishment of seven other clusters\(^{34}\) to support humanitarian relief activities addressing the drought and conflict in Mali\(^{35}\).

Education Cluster priorities for 2017 focus on children of school age living in those 65 communities who are affected by the security crisis, as well as schools that are at extreme risk of natural disasters such as flooding in the central and southern parts of Mali. Out of 934 primary schools in the 65 communities affected by the security crisis, 32% are currently-non-functional. Intake capacity of these schools is low due to lacking or damaged infrastructure\(^{36}\) as well as the absence of 346 teachers, all of which impacts the resumption of normal school activities. These schools must be reinforced in order to provide a safe environment for children of school age. In the central and southern parts of the country, 9,542 schools are exposed to natural disasters and epidemics such as cholera. The Education Cluster will focus on 20% of these schools lacking infrastructure such as the latrines and sources of water needed to provide a safe learning environment (OCHA 2016: 18).

A challenge for the work of the humanitarian community will be the difficult access to the region of Kidal, where armed groups who were participating in the peace agreement are fighting for territorial control. Besides the high crime rate, the destruction of the aerodrome in the city of Kidal during demonstrations there in April 2016 poses another major challenge. For its absence severely hampers the movement of humanitarian personnel and the introduction of alternative solutions into this area.

4.3.2.2 The Education Cluster in Mali

At the time the establishment of an Education Cluster in Mali was approved (May 2012), in order to support implementation of the national education plan, there was already a local education group on the ground that was mainly supported by and composed of various donors. As a consequence of the coup d’état in March 2012, however, bilateral partners decided to interrupt the activities of this local education group, stating they would not resume cooperation until the election of a new president, which took place in July 2013.

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\(^{34}\) These were (in chronological order of establishment): Food security, Nutrition, Health, Protection, Logistics, WASH and Emergency Telecommunications


\(^{36}\) This is largely due to destruction and pollution from explosive remnants of war and the use of schools by displaced populations and occupation by armed groups (OCHA 2016: 18)
As stated by the first Education Cluster Coordinator in Mali (deployed there in March 2012), establishing this structure was a rather lengthy process, compared to other countries. One of the reasons for this was that given the fact there had been no crisis for a long time in Mali, neither the Government, nor NGO partners on the ground there were prepared to respond to an emergency situation. In addition, it took some time to make these entities understand the purpose of the Education Cluster. The Ministry of Education (MoE) recognized that since the work of the local education group had been suspended, the cluster would be the only platform enabling interaction with partners and permitting technical and financial support to be received. Even though there was sometimes disagreement on certain political issues, the basic principles of the cluster were understood within the MoE, which was involved from the outset in the development of an education strategy and a clear plan of tasks and responsibilities of each entity involved in the cluster.

An important element that adds value to the work of the Education Cluster in Mali is the active involvement of the MoE, which appoints senior officials from the Malian MoE to serve as president of the cluster. As such, this person chairs the cluster and presides over meetings, thus reinforcing the idea that the cluster, intended as a temporary mechanism, will one day be integrated into a local education coordination group. Furthermore, it is expected that support from and involvement of Government authorities would give EiE more visibility and support its relevance to politicians’, donors’ and other stakeholders’ agendas.

What turned out to be especially challenging was getting on board NGOs on the ground, since there already existed a coordination platform for NGOs involved in education. At first the creation of the cluster caused confusion within this group, especially among international partners, along with a concern that the cluster had come to replace the already existing platform.

At the regional and local levels, entities already active in Mali were more receptive to the cluster from the very beginning because they had better insight into the severity of the conflict and what the needs were at field level. What the Cluster Coordinator observed at that time was that these local NGOs and civil society organizations had developed a mechanism for coping with crises and implementing activities themselves, but they were grateful to receive support in the form of technical expertise and financial assistance. Further reinforcing a sense that the cluster would one day be integrated into the local coordination group, it was important for it to include and collaborate with the various partners working on education, among these: local NGOs, civil society organizations and communities. The latter were especially instrumental for the work of the Education Cluster, be it for social service provision or for negotiating with rebel groups in communities opposed to education taking place or who disapproved of the education strategies or programmes developed by the government.

While the Malian MoE was highly engaged from the outset and willing to assume responsibilities related to his role as president of the Education Cluster, he was reluctant to involve these entities, fearing that these might be involved in one way or another in criminal activities related to the ongoing conflict. In
order to face this challenge and build trust between the different entities, the Education Cluster put in place a group on community participation whereby they attempted to link entities at the national level with communities at the local level, especially those which were at that time most strongly impacted by the conflict (Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu).

For the moment, there are five clusters at sub-national level, of which three are currently active. The Education Cluster at the national level is usually led by UNICEF and co-led by Save the Children. Ideally, there should be a dedicated Cluster Coordinator and a co-lead who often would also assume the role of Information Manager. At the time the cluster was established, however, the appointed Cluster Coordinator needed to wear two hats, assuming the role of IM as well. Interview partners reported that the cluster’s HR capacity was often very limited, and even though there was a time when it was better staffed, the current HR situation is again characterized by overstretched resources. A Cluster Coordinator designated by UNICEF ensures an information management role at the same time carrying out his actual function as Programme Officer.

This situation can be a challenge insofar as the acting Cluster Coordinator may be perceived as representing his/her employer’s interest (in this case UNICEF’s) and not those of the EiE community. Thus, the Cluster Coordinator must be careful to separate his/her different roles when dealing with other partners. As suggested by a former Chief of Education of UNICEF for Mali, this may be achieved by using a different e-mail address when writing on behalf of the Education Cluster. Another approach could be to ask a UNICEF colleague to join the cluster’s meetings to represent UNICEF. With respect to the current situation in Mali, it is surely an advantage that Government authorities at both the national and the regional level are willing to be involved actively in the cluster. However, coordination and information sharing between the different intervention levels of the cluster may prove to be a challenge too great for a double- or even triple-hatted Cluster Coordinator (when he or she assumes the role of Information Manager as well). As shown in illustration 2 (annex), actors who collaborate directly with the cluster (such as education authorities at different levels, national and local NGOs, community-based organizations, etc.), influence its activities (this group of actors includes donors) and may stand in various ways in relation to the cluster, thus increasing complexity in terms of the various entities involved.

4.3.2.3 Opportunities and challenges

In the five years since the establishment of the Education Cluster in Mali there have been only a few periods during which the Education Cluster was ideally staffed with a dedicated Cluster Coordinator from the designated lead agency (often UNICEF or Save the Children) and the other agency taking a co-leader function while also being responsible for Information Management.

As stated by the first Cluster Coordinator for Mali, a well-staffed Education Cluster is crucial to better assuming its core functions as set out in the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the
Country level (2015). One of these functions would be to annually monitor the performance of national clusters so as to inform the HC and facilitate the HCT’s strategic decision-making process. Results from cluster performance monitoring are expected to provide an important contribution to the evaluation of the Humanitarian Country Team’s performance as per the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).

Interview partners stated that a lack of HR capacity made it impossible to carry out monitoring of the cluster’s performance as required by the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring process.

According to the current Cluster Coordinator in Mali, yearly assessment was undertaken at a time when there was a dedicated Cluster Coordinator and Information Manager. When juggling between two or even three functions, priorities need to be set carefully. While in the context of a sudden onset emergency more time will be dedicated to exercising the cluster’s roles as required, attention to and prioritization of chronic and ongoing emergencies within the humanitarian system diminishes, as does the Education Cluster’s HR capacity. Although such a situation clearly has an impact on the cluster’s activities, it is difficult to change due to a lack of funding for a full-time cluster coordination position.

Another element related to HR capacity in the Education Cluster in Mali was the high staff turnover rate, prevailing not only among members of the Education Cluster team deployed there, but also within the highly-engaged Ministry of Education. Often senior officials with a high degree of decision-making power are appointed to be the Education Cluster’s focal points; the challenge, however, is that these are often persons only a few years away from retirement, meaning that considerable time is devoted to capacity building for people who will most likely be leaving their posts within a short time.

As pointed out by interview partners, this involves the risk of capacity building tending to target specific individuals, whereas from a long-term perspective it should focus on strengthening the institution as a whole.

Another factor highlighted as having a strong impact on the work and success of the Education Cluster is the engagement of donors: at the onset of the crisis and while the local coordination group was deactivated, commitment from the donor group funding the existing coordination mechanism (mainly development actors) was weak in part because of the lack of an elected government and inexistent education strategy. As a result, the Education Cluster needed to turn to humanitarian donors who failed

37 Performance monitoring at national level is mandatory, but it is up to country clusters to decide if they would like to undertake it at sub-national level as well (CCPM 2014: 6)

38 The HPC is a reference module introduced in 2011 as part of the IASC Transformative Agenda to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The HPC consists of six sequential elements and as such forms a cycle to guide or structure the response of all humanitarian actors – including UN agencies, NGOs, civil society and governments – and thus enhance inter-agency coordination and response. These six steps are to be supported by ongoing coordination and information management – which are supposedly central roles for cluster coordination (HPC 2015).

39 The Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) process and its accompanying reporting format were drawn up by the IASC Sub-working group on the cluster approach in August 2012 (CCPM 2014: 3)
to perceive education as a life-saving measure. It was through an appeal by OCHA that funding for EiE was eventually found.

Although EiE is acknowledged and prioritized by the MoE, in the end it is external donors that are the decisive entities when it comes to developing and funding a country’s education strategy. And for many of the major education sector donors, emergency education does not seem to be something they wish to prioritize.

This is a problem also highlighted by the former UNICEF Chief of Education in Mali, who added the importance of constant advocacy to make clear how EiE is both a life-saving measure and something that can feed into long-term development planning as well.

What would be ideal in the case of EiE is to bring donors on board and convince them to provide non-earmarked funding over a period of several years rather than requiring that funding be linked to specific humanitarian or development activities.

What needs to be made clear to partners is that a well-functioning education cluster is the basis of development work that can help bridge the humanitarian and development divide. As such it merits investment. Thus, there can never be enough advocacy for EiE and the work of the Education Cluster, as is also apparent if we look at collaboration between actors at the national and regional level. However, a certain disconnect between these two levels was reflected not only in the meetings held, but also in the information exchange and between the MoE in Bamako and regional authorities. Due to staff turnover at both levels there is a constant need for training and capacity building, which further consumes the already restricted resources of the Education Cluster.

Another area that could be strengthened is collaboration with other clusters, which normally needs to be facilitated by OCHA. Often, however, it is the different clusters that reach out to each other to share or request information, and although there are several topics that clusters collaborate on as part of their mandates, there could be a much greater involvement of education. A closer evaluation of such inter-sectoral interaction could on the one hand help mobilise resources and on the other result in a more effective cross-sectoral response resulting in greater impact.

Beside inter-cluster coordination meetings, there exist other exchange platforms for humanitarian actors, such as the UN Country Team (UNCT), which is deemed a relevant platform for UNICEF to specifically advocate for EiE issues and eventually attract other agencies to attend its meetings and engage in EiE. The success of this approach, however, is context-specific, as was stated by the former UNICEF Chief of Education, who emphasized that in Mali it was a challenge for UNICEF’s UN counterparts to understand the purpose of EiE. This was mainly because agencies on the ground, as well as the Government, donors and other partner organizations had not been exposed to a humanitarian emergency in Mali for quite some time.
While this is clearly an external factor that, especially at the beginning of the crisis, has an impact on the work of the Education Cluster, it is again the cluster’s responsibility to make sure the topic of advocacy is taken up by its education partner agencies. It can be argued that in the end, it is in the responsibility of the cluster to decide whether and how it can deal with such external challenges. Of course, there are context-specific elements where the Education Cluster’s possibilities for action are even more restrained. For example, the high turnover rates within the education authorities at different levels, or even less the chronically insecure situation that results in accessibility constraints. There were, however, many elements that cannot clearly be assigned as internal or external, since they often overlap and might have their roots in the other category.

To sum up, it seems that the roots of the factors prevailing in Mali and influencing the Education Cluster’s work there are internal HR capacity (including capacity of the Government), lack or insufficient advocacy, lack of funding, information gaps between different levels, missing inter-agency coordination and accessibility problems due to security issues. It is assumed that these factors trigger a decoupling of activities from the formal structure; for example, by not completing required performance management forms that serve both the Global Education Cluster (GEC) and the HCT. Furthermore, an EiE strategy can be developed with education authorities; however, it is to a certain extent dependent on the Government’s budgeting section, which might be influenced by donors.

In addition to the factors mentioned it is necessary to always consider the range of actors who, while it might not be their core function, might be involved in humanitarian response but work in parallel with the cluster. This could be in the case of Mali military forces (with whom the Education Cluster is not in the position to negotiate; see Global Education Cluster 2010: 68), religious institutions, private-sector entities and diaspora groups (ALNAP 2016: 19). These together with other factors not clearly assignable as internal or external result in the high complexity encountered by the Education Cluster to coordinate response in Mali.

4.4 Case II: The Education Cluster in Nigeria

4.4.1 Introduction

The conflict in Nigeria, fuelled mainly by the advent of the terrorist group Boko Haram in the northeastern part of the country in 2009, has thus far claimed more than 32,000 lives and caused displacement of over two million people (Al Jazeera Documentary). It is this part of Nigeria that is currently suffering from a devastating food crisis, whose relief is being hampered by general accessibility constraints for different areas. High displacement rates, restricted access to education and sudden climate-change-related events have added to the current humanitarian situation.
4.4.1.1 Country profile

Nigeria is a former British colony in Western Africa that gained its independence in 1960. After almost 40 years of military rule, a new constitution was adopted after the death of the last military head of state, and a peaceful transition to civilian government took place in 1999 (The World Factbook 2016). With more than 186 million inhabitants Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country, and with more than 250 ethnic groups one of the most diverse (ibid). It is located between Benin and Cameroon and borders the Gulf of Guinea to the South. Nigeria is sub-divided into 36 states and one territory; While the former are headed by elected governors, the Federal Capital Territory, within which Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, is located, is administered by the Federal Capital Territory Administration, with a minister in charge of it appointed by the President. Those 36 states are again sub-divided into 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs), which are each administered by a Local Government Council. Nigeria is said to have emerged as Africa’s largest economy, with a significant amount of its revenues derived from oil. Despite its oil wealth and growth in agriculture, telecommunications, and services over the last few years, Nigeria remains a country with a high percentage of its population living in extreme poverty (62%) (UNDP 2016).

4.4.1.2 Roots of the conflict

While international attention was drawn to Nigeria in 2009 with the outbreak of a chapter of extreme violence stemming from the advent of the Islamist group Boko Haram, the origins of this conflict can be attributed to the country’s complex political and socio-economic situation.

Although the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria is deeply affected by poverty, inequality and corruption, as well as by fierce competition over the country’s oil revenues. Geographically, there is a large socio-economic divide between the richer South, inhabited by a mainly a Christian population, and the poorer, rural, predominantly Muslim North (Insight on Conflict Nigeria 2015).

The return to democracy in 1999 raised hopes of an end to the widespread corruption in politics and in Nigeria’s elite. Dissatisfied about being excluded from the economic success of the South, and having lost faith in the country’s Government, many Nigerians in the Muslim North were convinced that a more rigorous application of Islamic law would put an end to corruption and enable a fairer distribution of wealth. They felt understood by a 32-year old preacher, Mohammed Yusuf, who established the sect Boko Haram in the town of Maiduguri, capital city of Borno State in northeastern Nigeria, where Islamic law has been practised since the 11th century.

Mohammed Yusuf condemned inequality and corruption in Nigeria and expressed his anger towards public institutions through his sermons, which are said to have been very violent in tone. An excellent orator, he was able to literally hypnotize those present at his masses, and eventually these people formed

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40 The exact number was 186,053,386 in July 2016
a community. Violence erupted at a funeral procession, where police officers opened fire on a group of Boko Haram supporters who refused to wear helmets when driving their motorcycles.

This incident triggered the anger of Mohammed Yusuf and his supporters against the government, and soon this anger began to be expressed through acts of revenge, in which Boko Haram supporters fiercely attacked public institutions such as churches and mosques in Maiduguri. Mohammed Yusuf’s extrajudicial execution was the straw that broke the camel’s back. And with the leader of the group having been removed, a number of splinter groups started to form and spread. While the first organized attacks of Boko Haram did not particularly target Christians, but rather what they considered to be corrupt Muslims in Government institutions and in the security forces, in 2010 Boko Haram also started targeting Christian minorities. This change of strategy and Boko Haram’s general expansion and the increasing number of outrages it perpetrated were said to have partly been fostered by the Nigerian army, which was supposed to fight Boko Haram but instead was a source of fear herself, having itself exercised brutality and committed several human rights violations in the past.

Little by little Boko Haram widened the scope of its attacks, started to control whole territories and spread fear among civilians, which resulted in waves of internally displaced persons and overcrowding in refugee and IDP camps.

The Islamic extremist group Boko Haram, meaning literally “Western education prohibited”, is opposed to everything related to the Western World and which recalls the country’s colonial past. Finally, Boko Haram’s activities caused global outrage with the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in northeastern Nigeria in April 2014.

Since the advent of the group, Boko Haram’s actual strategy and ideology remain unclear. In 2015, they pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who named the territory under Boko Haram’s control Islamic State of West Africa Province (BBC 2013).

Although Nigerian Government forces managed to clear many areas of Boko Haram’s presence last year, the security situation is still dire, characterised by the prevalence of individual attacks in public places or on roads connecting to officially “cleared’’ areas.41

Although Boko Haram is the main cause of Nigeria’s current dire humanitarian crisis, the country faces additional problems stemming from the deteriorating economic situation and climate-change-affected problems. The impact on the humanitarian response, especially in terms of education, will be discussed in the following sections.

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41 Statement of a former RRT member deployed to Maiduguri/Borno State in October 2016
4.4.1.3 Humanitarian situation

While the Nigerian Armed Forces managed to push Boko Haram back from previously captured, and thus largely inaccessible, areas in 2016, the humanitarian crisis in the northeastern part of Nigeria is more severe than ever. Out of six states in that region, the three most hardly hit are Borno, Yobe and Adamawe, with 8.5 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 2017: 2). In August 2016, these States were declared L-3 emergencies by four UN agencies and IOM. Borno, besides being the hardest-affected of the three, accounts for 69% of all IDPs and hosts 52% of the estimated people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, which gives an idea of the seriousness of the humanitarian problem in Borno.

The impact of the conflict has resulted in severe food insecurity in these normally self-sufficient agricultural areas, mass displacement (mainly returnees from neighbouring countries, especially from Cameroon and Chad, and IDPs), international and human rights violations and, since the onset of the conflict, attacks on teachers and the destruction of more than 1200 school facilities by Boko Haram (OCHA 2017: 7). While prior to the conflict school enrolment and the attendance rate already counted as among the lowest in the northeastern part of Nigeria, there are some cases of children who have been deprived of education access for more than two years now (OCHA 2017: 8).

Out of 27 inaccessible LGAs in Borno State, nine have become accessible in the last three months (between November 2016 and January 2017) thanks to military forces that succeeded in driving back Boko Haram. In Yobe all 17 LGAs are accessible again. Accessibility here is relative, however: while most of these LGA administrative centers (district capitals) might be cleared, the level of insurgency/insecurity often increases when moving away from the heart of the LGA. Although Boko Haram was expelled from great parts of the territory of the LGAs, the situation remains insecure due to Boko Haram supporters’ sneaking back into populated areas and creating insurgency there (e.g. suicide bombings). In other cases, remnants of the group have been hiding out in the forests. Food shortages in these rural areas (due to partial inaccessibility) results in attacks on villages, humanitarian convoys and vehicles transporting food, which is one of the reasons for the number of sporadic attacks in 2016 remaining as high as in 2015 (OCHA 2017: 5).

The fact that many LGAs are only accessible when accompanied by military escorts shows that there are still restrictions on movement, which results in the inability of many humanitarian partners to reach affected populations.

The large displacement of persons within the country not only makes it difficult to track and assess their needs; it also results in an excessive use of infrastructure and resources, which increases the difficulties of fighting poverty and related problems in a region that has been deprived of socio-economic development for a long time (OCHA 2017: 8).
Last but not least, Nigeria belongs, along with Chad and Niger, to the countries in the Sahel categorized as under ‘extreme climate risk’. There has been an increase in the number and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods. And more frequent climate shocks threaten vulnerable households, which are already unable to cope with the ongoing humanitarian crisis (Human Response Needs Overview (HRNO) Sahel 2017: 4).

Detection of the first case of Lassa Fever in 48 years in Borno State early in March 2017 has caused additional fear of a possible outbreak of the virus in a country already facing a dire humanitarian situation (WHO 2017).

![Illustration 3: Humanitarian Needs Overview Nigeria 2017](image)

**Illustration 3: Humanitarian Needs Overview Nigeria 2017**

### 4.4.2 Coordinating EiE in Nigeria

A thematic session on EiE, held in the framework of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region on 24 February 2017, shed light on the increasing needs for emergency education especially in three regions in northeastern Nigeria, which are considered to be most affected by displacement, violence and food insecurity (Oslo Humanitarian Conference 2017). Four UN agencies and IOM declared these areas as L-3 emergencies in August 2016 (US Agency for International Development 2016)

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42 Lassa Fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness typically detected in West Africa. The last confirmed outbreak was in 1969.

43 Background paper for the Thematic Session on Education in Emergencies – Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, 24 February 2017

44 Lake Chad Basin – Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #12, Fiscal Year (FY) 2016.
Development 2016), meaning that humanitarian actors must scale up their response in order to be able to meet the increasing needs of affected populations. What this means concretely, how the Education Cluster functions in Nigeria and what challenges it encounters, will be discussed in this section.

4.4.2.1 Priorities for 2017

Although no comprehensive needs assessment has been carried out as yet for EiE in Nigeria45, an estimated 1.6 million out of an expected 2.9 million people are targeted by the EiE Working Group in Nigeria46. The three objectives the education response should focus on in 2017 are:

1) Ensuring safe and equitable access to inclusive, child-friendly and protected learning for the group of 3 – 17-year-olds;

2) Reducing risks to all conflict-affected girls and boys aged 3-17 through the improved ability to cope with negative psychosocial effects and limiting the physical danger presented by the conflict;

3) Empowering and involving communities in conflict-affected areas to contribute to the restoration and protection of learning (OCHA 2017: 32).

The destruction of more than 1200 schools has led to the lack of a functioning school infrastructure, teaching and training materials, and qualified teachers. An adequate learning environment will be re-established only through the training of more teachers and provision of necessary learning materials.

Special emphasis will thus be placed on the training of education personnel in the fields of pedagogy, psychosocial first-aid and essential life-skills as well as training in formal, non-formal and extracurricular activities. A safe learning environment will be re-established through the creation of temporary learning spaces and/or emergency repair of existing infrastructure and the distribution of learning materials. The EiE Working Group Coordinator at the state level stressed that in order to efficiently reach these goals, it is important to involve the WASH, Protection and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sectors and Working Groups.

Moreover, the EiE Working Group will try, wherever possible, to establish and train School-based Management Committees and Community Education Coalitions, which are like Parent-Teacher associations (HRP 2017: 32). The aim: to bring communities together and provide them with skills and knowledge to better cope with the fear of continued violent incidents and to empower them to contribute to protecting, restoring and supporting learning for conflict-affected 3 – 17-year-olds (ibid).

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45 Interview partners reported that since the onset of the conflict no comprehensive joint needs assessment has been carried out for the Education sector, which is a normal assessment process that should be done for every response sector at the beginning of an emergency. Needs assessment forms the first phase of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and is fundamental for needs-based strategic-planning and system-wide monitoring (OCHA 2016).

46 In Nigeria Education Clusters are referred to as “Working Groups”. More details will be provided in the next section of this chapter.
4.4.2.2 The Education Cluster in Nigeria

‘‘But a village or a nation that has the capacity to cope with a crisis and meet people’s needs through its own public and private resources has, by definition, no need of the international humanitarian system’’ (ACAPS 2015: 19)

The Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiE WG) at national level was established in November 2012 in response to massive flooding in the southwestern part of Nigeria (Terms of Reference (TOR) EiE Working Group Nigeria 2013: 1). Despite the deteriorating situation in Nigeria, resulting in the declaration of three areas as L-3 emergencies, the central Government in Abuja would not accept the establishment of clusters, fearing that this would mark the country as a failed state, which could have an impact on the country’s ability to receive development loans from the World Bank, negatively impact tourism, etc.47 This is why the term ‘‘Working Group’’48 (WG) is used in the context of Nigeria, although, as stated by one interviewee, humanitarian actors involved in the response coordination know that what they were effectively doing was cluster coordination. The rise of Boko Haram attacks targeted specifically at school facilities forced the EiE WG to include the resulting education emergency in their activity plan as well.

However, due to the dangerous security situation, many areas expected to be strongly affected remained inaccessible. It was around October 2015, when Nigerian military forces liberated some of these areas, that two EiE sub-level Working Groups were established, largely supported by OCHA and UNICEF, at the regional level in the States of Borno and Yobe. Although local education authorities were willing to lead these sub-level working groups, one of the interviewees felt that at the time she was deployed collaboration with the EiE WG at the national level was marginal and both levels had been functioning quite independently. One of the questions discussed among OCHA and EiE staff deployed was, whether it would not make more sense to move the center of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) from the capital, Abuja, to Borno, given the fact that Borno State was hit hardest by the conflict.

The situation seems to have improved, however, as stated by the current Working Groups’ coordinators at the national and state level, both deployed from UNICEF. While the EiE Working Groups at the two levels are led by appointed officials of their respective Ministries of Education, these coordinators act as Working Group co-leads. They both share the same TORs and coordinate their activities according to their respective working levels. While the EiE WG at the state level might have better access to affected populations and relevant information on the situation on the ground, the WG at the national level has the ability to advocate for better understanding of EiE among Government entities, to address

47 This explanation was provided by different interview partners interviewed in the context of this case study. The same holds true for other countries such as Afghanistan, for example, where ‘‘clusters’’ would be referred to as working groups (https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/education).

48 For more information on the different models to involve education clusters in a response, refer to chapter 3
issues with central Government authorities and to take an active role in strategic planning and the development of the Federal Ministry of Education’s (FMOE) workplan.

In doing so, another entity must be involved as well: the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the entity that coordinates and to a large extent funds the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria at the state level through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) established in each state (UBEC 2016). The current WG coordinator at national level stressed that it was especially important to request someone at the Director level in UBEC’s work with the Working Group’s focal point from the national MoE (someone who should be at least at Deputy-Director level) in order to ensure the humanitarian response plan be integrated in and guided by the MoE’s work plan (OCHA 2017: 33). At the same time, this would increase ownership of EiE activities by these entities, which is desirable, given the fact that clusters or Working Groups are set up as temporary mechanisms and thus, government authorities should ideally be in the driver’s seat, as it were, with the Cluster Coordinator taking a support role.

Having said this, ideally EiE WG meetings at both levels are attended by at least the MoE focal point of the respective EiE WG, a UBEC focal point, and both Working Group co-leads from UNICEF and Save the Children. Other partners attending the Working Group’s meetings are international NGOs, faith-based organizations and civil-society organizations. Also, community-based organizations (CBO’s) have been encouraged to attend Working Group meetings. Although, as mentioned above, an important component of EiE was to reinforce community involvement, the current Cluster Coordinator at the state level mentioned that this would have to be approached very cautiously. Although CBOs - as part of the population - know the context best, have better access to information and can help decrease operational costs, they often do not have the technical capacity to run a programme. This is why EiE Working Groups need to invest in training materials and capacity building of such potential partners.

In terms of interacting with other sectoral Working Groups the EiE WGs seek regular collaboration with the Gender-Based Violence (GBV), WASH, Child Protection (under the Global Protection Cluster) and Nutrition Working Groups.

“In my opinion, collaboration with other sectors is supposed to function with the vision of what I like to call a ‘model school’ with clean, well-fed children learning in a healthy environment. The well-fed, health, learning child. That’s all we have to try to focus on” EiE WG Coordinator at the state level, based in Borno State

4.4.2.3 Opportunities and challenges

Although there seems to have been some improvement in the situation, one of the main challenges for the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria remains the prioritization of EiE within the country’s national Government. This is primarily reflected in its reluctance to introduce clusters to the country, because this would imply that they were admitting the need for international assistance. There is also the funding
issue: according to some international donors Nigeria would theoretically have the means to invest in emergency response (thanks to its oil revenues); this would lead to the assumption on the part of donors that the country has no need of additional financial resources to fund humanitarian activities.

Although the Ministries of Education and partners at both national and state level are more than willing to collaborate, the allocation of funds still represents a pressing issue for which considerable advocacy efforts are needed in order to make sure the need for EiE is understood and prioritized strategically by relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Budgeting and Planning. As stated by a former RRT member, progress can be reached much easier at the sub-national level; it is less political than at the national level, which allows collaboration and coordination to occur almost organically.

Another challenge for coordination related to the recognition of the severity of the crisis was the long absence of international and local partners working on the Education response. This might be related to the fact that the humanitarian situation in Nigeria has not received as much international coverage as other crises: although in 2016 Nigeria’s most affected states were declared L-3 emergencies within some UN organizations, an emergency had never been declared in the country as a whole. Much of the work during the past months was related to advocacy (which needs to be ongoing due to staff turnovers, etc.) and the identification of partners, which has been going well according to the current EiE Working Group Coordinator at national level. As was stated in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Nigeria, education response will in 2017 be implemented by 13 partners from both national and international NGOs, UN and community-based organizations (OCHA 2017: 34). While building these collaboration networks, it is important, as recommended by a former RRT member deployed to Nigeria in 2016, for the Working Groups to operate as a strategic hub for all partners from the beginning, serving as a platform where all stakeholders come together and define jointly a strategic plan according to needs evaluations and priorities.

Another major challenge is inherently connected to the security situation in the country. Although many areas in the three strongest conflict-affected states have been liberated, Boko Haram soldiers are dispersed around all areas, which creates pockets of insecurity. This shift from organized attacks attributable to the group as a whole are now more individually based, which makes the situation much more unpredictable. An example of this are regular suicide bombings in Borno State, which puts the lives of civilians and humanitarian workers at risk. This again has a negative effect on the number of teachers willing to go out to these areas to teach. Also, many humanitarian organizations are not willing and often do not have the capacity (security measures) to deploy their staff to these unsafe areas, which again has an impact on the number of partners collaborating with the EiE Working Groups. The serious insecurity problem and low availability of partners, along with a high level of displacement of populations across the countries further hampers the possibility to do proper needs assessment in a large number of areas outside the district capitals.
The security situation in Nigeria is undeniably a context-specific factor, and the Working Groups will need to do whatever they can to find alternative solutions enabling them to implement their work the best way possible. In the case of needs assessment this would be via strengthened collaboration with local partners and communities. This requires strong relationships, which are, as stated by different interviewees, often easier to form at the states level (greater willingness to collaborate). It further requires strong technical skills, which are not achieved merely through the availability of good information management (IM) systems and strategies, but more importantly, thanks to the availability of qualified professionals to do the job.

As already seen in the Mali case coordinators are often obliged to carry out different functions, which inevitably requires prioritization of one or the other tasks. Although the deployment of RRT members dedicated to specific tasks adds great value to the work of the EiE Working Groups, these short expert deployments are not always beneficial since they lead to high staff turn-over. This can result in confusion among partners and difficult hand-overs as well as institutional knowledge-loss. Moreover, frequent turnovers increase the risk that staff might be deployed with inadequate skills to perform the jobs to which they have been assigned.

While HR capacity was identified as one of the main internal problems of the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria, it must be taken into consideration that internal and external factors are often influenced by one another: as the coordinator of the state level EiE Working Group concluded, UNICEF, Save the Children, or others can deploy their best staff to co-lead the Working Groups; however, as long as the MoE and other government entities do not recognize the importance of their tasks as cluster or Working Group leads, essential progress will not be achieved. While it might indeed be a good idea to request someone at a Senior level as focal point of an EiE Working Group, the person deployed must be willing to take his/her responsibilities seriously. Though possible, it is not always easy to find such a person.

Another difficulty categorized as internal, that, however, seems to have improved in recent times is the collaboration between Working Groups at the state level and national level, resulting in less duplication and a better flow of information in both directions.

Although interviewees felt that OCHA is often running low on capacity, meaning that sometimes it requests delivery of information within very short deadlines, they considered its presence to be positive and supportive.

The main external challenges interviewees indicated, besides security and accessibility issues, was the lack of funding for EiE activities. EiE Working Groups are aware of the importance to constantly advocate for the topic, both with respect to potential partners and, more importantly, government authorities. In 2016, no funding was allocated for EiE. This can, among other reasons, be traced back to the fact that no thorough needs assessment had been conducted, which in turn is attributable to a lack of financial and personnel capacity.
The objective is to trigger a sense of ownership of EiE among the MoE at the different levels, which is indispensable when envisioning a transition or integration of these time-bound Working Groups within the national and local coordination systems. According to one of the interviewees, one of the challenges when doing advocacy is not only to raise awareness of the importance of continuous learning in crisis situations, but also to convey the message on its mid- and long-term impact for security, sustainability and the progress of a society. Unfortunately, this component has not been appreciated well enough. While normally it is a challenge for the EiE field to convince stakeholders of the life-saving component of education, here the problem, rather, is to look beyond the emergency situation. One challenge observed by the EiE Working Group is that, although having enabled a number of children to go back to school, there are no adequate teaching materials available, not to mention qualified teachers to help educate the children.

‘‘There’s nothing worse than losing a generation and we have to make sure this does not happen in Nigeria.’’ (Statement by current EiE WG Coordinator for Borno State)

According to an interviewee, these are problems that the government should be addressing, and not an Education Cluster or Working Group. When one of the interviewees was asked whether he thinks one of the cluster specifications as defined ten years ago, i.e. to remain a temporary mechanism, is adequate in view of the high number and protracted nature of certain crises, he immediately answered in the affirmative. The crucial question for this interviewee, however, was, rather, what is the appropriate time for cluster activation and deactivation and when should one start preparing for the latter. Clusters and Working Groups are normally established to support government authorities at a time when these do not have the sufficient capacity to provide humanitarian assistance to the population. All parties involved – authorities, donors, partners and the cluster/WG system – must from the outset keep in mind that the primary responsibility to ensure the well-being of the population remains with the government and shall not be transferred to a time-bound support mechanism such as the cluster/Working Group. According to one interviewee: ‘‘Governments must learn to assume responsibility for issues that arise in the recovery and development phase’’. Fostering the understanding of what a cluster is and is not is clearly listed as key point in the Education Cluster Coordinator Handbook for advocating the cluster approach (2010: 55).

As seen above in the Mali case study, the separation between internal and external factors is artificial. Identifying the exact origins of each factor is difficult, since origins and impacts are cross-boundary. The main challenges for the EiE Working Group in Nigeria remain: HR capacity (due to staff turnover and lack of technical capacity), advocacy, funding allocation, lack of partners with the means to collaborate, and sometimes merely a pretense of cooperating. Other challenges that are more difficult to control are: the volatile security situation, unpredictability of how the conflict will evolve (owing to a worsening food security situation) and high displacement rates. As mentioned earlier, one often underestimated challenge is the understanding of the function of Education Cluster structures, and the
implementation of that function in practice with stakeholders involved. Intimately connected with these
difficulties is the dual nature of EiE.

“We work towards the provision of education, while Boko Haram tries to suppress it. Sure, this might
sound like a Sisyphean task. But, what we often tell ourselves and our partners is: you have to be aware
of the fact that doing nothing at all will raise the illiteracy rate in Nigeria and leave large numbers of
children and youth without education, without any perspectives. And this, might fuel the conflict and
worsen the situation in the long term. The more education we put in, the less probable is Boko Haram
to succeed.”

4.5 Case comparison and analysis

The investigation of current Education Cluster structures in Mali and Nigeria shows that, while there
are some case-specific differences, there were a number of both internal and external factors that had an
identical impact on the coordination of education response in both cases. In the following chapter, both
similarities and differences between the two cases will be highlighted and analysed.

4.5.1 Coordinating EiE in Mali and Nigeria

Due to the dynamic nature of the interviews it was not possible to cover mechanically each and every
factor listed in the catalogue, and yet, most topics came into discussion, which allows us to capture a
first key finding, that is that there is a strong interconnectedness between elements seen as exercising an
influence on the work of education, both within “internal” and “external” categories but also cross-
category

This demonstrates two important things: first, that the separation into “internal” and “external” factors
is artificial, given the fact that factors classified as belonging to one or the other category are
interdependent and may originate in the other category. This difficulty is multiplied by a certain
ambiguity of factors. Let’s take as an example the factor “information management”, which is a crucial
task within cluster coordination: That an Information Manager is appointed does not necessarily ensure
IM is carried out properly. In fact, interviewees felt that this task was often poorly performed, an
observation shared in previous evaluations (Steets et al. 2010: 46).

In the case of Mali, a triple-hatted Cluster Coordinator\textsuperscript{50} stated that due to lack of human resources it
was not possible to prioritize all of his tasks equally, and often, IM would be handled as a secondary

\textsuperscript{49} Statement made by an interviewee on the question of whether it would not be a Sisyphean task to work towards the
provision of something that the Islamist group Boko Haram is trying to suppress.

\textsuperscript{50} Meaning: carrying out the function of Programme Specialist (UNICEF), Cluster Coordinator and Information Manager
(IM) simultaneously
priority only, which would result in a scarcity of up-to-date information. The factor “IM” here is thus dependent on HR capacity. Another example would be the factor “OCHA”, which has a central role within the cluster approach, providing the framework and infrastructure for coordination and being responsible for inter-cluster coordination (OCHA 2017). Although OCHA is present in both countries (which can thus be rated positively), interviewees for both Mali and Nigeria stated that unfortunately this entity often seems to be overwhelmed, which results in the feeling that clusters must support OCHA, whereas normally the opposite would be the case.

The second, more important key finding resulting from the blurriness of boundaries between “internal” and “external” factors shown above is that the coordination field of Education Clusters (and probably of any cluster) is characterized by high complexity, and in the end, it is difficult to provide a clear answer to the question of whether more internal or external factors prevail without looking at the roots of these factors as well as the direction their influence takes. The following illustration (made by the author of this paper) shows the number and complex interplay of factors categorized as “internal” or “external” exercising an influence on the coordination of EiE activities.

Illustration 5: Interconnectedness of internal and external factors

51 This person is primarily Programme Manager for UNICEF and as such is first and foremost accountable to his employer.

52 This illustration represents the two spaces within which factors influencing the implementation of practical activities of Education Cluster structures in Mali and Nigeria were anticipated; the yellow ovals illustrate the space with factors categorized as “internal”, while the blue circle contains factors initially categorized as “external”. As mentioned in Chapter 4.2 (“Methodology”) and as seen in the catalogue of internal and external factors in the annex, factors identified during the review of literature (research phase I) were classified into five broad categories: context, advocacy, management, implementation and working environment (see page 28). The six main factors identified by interviewees as being “most influential” for the work of the clusters, highlighted in bold, are described in section 4.5.2.
4.5.2 Main factors influencing coordination or: “Education is a priority, just not now.”

Although not all factors shown in this illustration are supposed to have the same influence on the performance of Education Clusters, the following six have, according to interview statements, greater influence, and their prevalence would impact or automatically evoke the prevalence of other factors:

*In-country situation*

In both cases the humanitarian situation and work of humanitarian workers is strongly influenced by current conflicts in both countries. The situation in Mali is expected to deteriorate in the course of this year in case of a collapse of the peace agreement between the Malian Government and armed groups, and the further expansion of Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine. While in 2016, Nigerian military forces successfully liberated different areas (LGAs) previously occupied by Boko Haram, the security situation remains unstable with a shift from group-based to individual insurgencies. In both countries, the crime rate remains high.

These contexts have a strong impact on the accessibility of the affected population in certain geographical areas. Additionally, large displacement rates in both countries hamper the possibility to do a detailed needs assessment, regardless of there being adequate information management systems and strategies in place.

*HR capacity*

It was interesting to see that all interviewees considered HR capacity to be the main internal challenge influencing the work of Education Clusters and Working Groups, which is an observation accurately reflecting findings made in previous evaluations (e.g. the CAE 2010 or at the Global Education Cluster (GEC) Meeting in 2015). For both cases, there was fluctuation in terms of HR capacity available since the introduction of the cluster approach (both in 2012).

Although in Mali education authorities at both the national and regional level are willing to take an active role in the cluster, there is a high turn-over rate of focal points within these institutions, meaning that much time is spent for training. The current Cluster Coordinator connects two challenges: 1) the risk of building capacity of individuals, instead of a stable body of personnel; and 2) the risk of there being a focal point whose involvement in the cluster is different with respect to his/her predecessor. With regard to internal personnel resources ideally made available by UNICEF or Save the Children, the Education Cluster in Mali is currently understaffed with a UNICEF Programme Manager at the same time performing the role of Cluster Coordinator and Information Manager. The interviewee stressed that it would be more important to have a dedicated IM person than a dedicated Cluster Coordinator, since the essence of the work the cluster builds on is to rely on information gathered. However, partners and
donors often underestimate the importance of this function and would rather fund the post of Cluster Coordinator.

Unlike in Mali, in Nigeria the current human resource situation at both national and regional level is considered “appropriate” (as compared to previous HR situations there) and not affected by high staff turn-over within MoE focal points. Here again, interviewees mentioned a fear of lack of involvement and dedication to the cluster’s work by appointed focal points, even if Cluster Coordinators would request only senior officials with a good reputation to be assigned as cluster focal points.

HR capacity within the Education Cluster is a large topic and refers not only to the quantitative amount of staff and partnering organizations, but also to their skills and experience. In Mali, for example, at the beginning of the emergency many partners were somewhat paralyzed, not having experienced an emergency situation before. This resulted in the cluster structure getting off to a rocky start. The former Chief of Education for UNICEF in Mali stressed the importance of having an emergency preparedness plan included as part of the work plan of each sector (Education, Nutrition, etc.).

**Prioritization of EiE**

The above-mentioned assumption that Education Clusters or structures such as Working Groups are often understaffed or not staffed by people appropriate to perform the functions they are assigned to has, according to interviewees, to a certain extent to do with the prioritization of EiE in the agendas of donors, partner organizations or respective education authorities or, in a broader sense, national governments.

For the most part this has to do with a lack of understanding of what EiE is, why it is needed and why a coordination mechanism to structure activities related to it might be beneficial. Of course, understanding differs among the many stakeholders the Education Cluster finds itself in some form of relation with (ranging from donors to beneficiaries). In Mali, for example, soon after the onset of the emergency, it was understood that performing a structured needs assessment, developing a joint strategy plan and appeal for funding for EiE would help bring those donors back on board who refused to collaborate with the MoE-led national coordination mechanism until the election of a new president. An observation confirmed by all interviewees was that, in general, the importance of EiE tended to be better appreciated at the regional and local level, given the fact that it was at these levels that people were in dire need of education.

**Advocacy for EiE**

A crucial element to increasing understanding of EiE and the work of the Education Cluster within a country is constant advocacy. This brings us back to the eternal problem of the EiE: namely, that of advocating for its dual nature as both life-saving in emergencies and crucial for mid- and long-term development. Why, despite all the advocacy since the advent of EiE as a field of intervention, is it still being under-prioritized mainly by donors? The reason: the immediate impact of education is simply not
visible. ‘If a child doesn’t get nourished, it will die. If it can not go to school, it might not have the same opportunities as other children later in life, but it will survive’. This is how one interviewee explained the absence of education in emergency situations. It is precisely because of a lack of understanding that the EiE field and the Education Cluster must invest far more resources for advocacy, starting at the local level, by extending activities such as community-based awareness raising.

**Funding for EiE**

Closely related to the advocacy-problem is, as mentioned already several times, the low prioritization of EiE in terms of funding. According to one interviewee, Education Clusters would be much better off if they could convince donors to provide non-earmarked funding that would not restrict them to invest for specific time-bound activities only, but rather to distribute funds over a longer time period. However, it is not the cluster that decides on how funds are distributed. The task of the cluster is restricted to coordinating the process of launching an appeal for funding (Papadopoulos 2010: 7), while it is the implementing agency that deals with donors. The problem is that, as was often stated in interviews, it is sometimes even within these agencies (partly even within the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs) UNICEF and Save the Children) that the need for EiE is underestimated.

**Collaboration across levels**

Another factor that prevailed and that was considered problematic was the collaboration and communication flow between national and sub-national Education Clusters and Working Groups. Associated risks are duplication of activities and excessive use of already scarce resources, for example when capacity-building measures must be undertaken several times at different levels instead of being more efficiently organized. In the Nigeria case, collaboration between different levels of intervention seems to have improved considerably. However, this might be only temporary, since, as stated by interviewees, the quality of coordination work depends greatly on a particular person’s skills, competencies and available time. While again the question arises of how to tackle this person-dependence, there remains external complexity resulting from the political structure and related high administrative burdens in both countries.

**4.5.3 The question of adequateness**

A striking finding when looking at these six factors identified to be equally important for the work of Education Clusters in Mali and the EiE Working Groups in Nigeria, is that these had already been found to be influential in previous evaluations on the implementation of the cluster approach in different contexts.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{53}\) For further reference see list of documents reviewed in the first research phase (annex)
This begs the question of whether the Education Cluster has not considered such evaluations in order to take advantage of lessons learned. Or is it that these elements are too difficult to control, given their interdependence? The question remains open. What can be said with certainty is that the Education Cluster seems to carry heavier burdens than other sectors of intervention, mostly owing to the difficulty of improving understanding of the multifaceted nature of the EiE field. While this cannot be confirmed or rejected for other sectoral clusters or Working Groups, the core of coordination activities of the Education Clusters/WGs in Mali and Nigeria is very person-dependent. Frequent changes of staff both within the Education Cluster and its closest partners, the education authorities, the short-term deployment of RRT members – such examples all demonstrate that the quality of the cluster’s performance fluctuates with these changes.

When asked whether they thought that the cluster was an adequate mechanism to coordinate the delivery of EiE activities, all interviewees answered in the affirmative, stating that it was better than having no platform whatsoever. They doubted, however, whether the cluster concept was implemented as it was intended, which again leads to the question of decoupling of practical activities from a formal structure. While most of the interview partners stated they knew no other coordination mechanism but the cluster, others were already working in the humanitarian assistance field prior to its advent and confirmed that having a cluster added value as compared to the earlier state of affairs. The question is not whether the cluster approach is the right model to follow, but, rather, why the humanitarian community fails to implement it correctly and how it can better deal with on-going problems such as the ones mentioned above.

‘‘We need a system, a structure, to ensure coordination takes place in a collaborative, synthetized way. When cluster coordination is done correctly, you begin to understand its added value and necessity. The problem is: it is rarely done well.’’

This comment by one of the interviewees shows the difficulties that the Education Cluster might encounter owing to its dual nature. In the view of one interviewee, there are always good-will discussions at the global level, such as, for example, within the framework of the above-mentioned meeting in Oslo on 24 February 201754 (ReliefWeb 2017). He wondered, however, what the situation will look like in a few months, whether all the pledges made will be followed through on. Related to this is the question of government willingness to allocate funding for education and of their sense of responsibility for EiE activities.

The question of ownership is related to a more fundamental one: the adequateness of the cluster approach’s purpose to serve as temporary mechanism in the ever-changing landscape of humanitarian

54 The thematic Session on Education in Emergencies in Nigeria aimed at advocating for the importance of EiE and strengthening of efforts to increase Education response in Nigeria: Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, 24 February 2017
crises. Given that most of today’s crises are of a protracted nature, and clusters are still activated, one might ask whether the decision criteria to activate, transition and deactivate clusters introduced by the IASC Transformative Agenda in 2011 can be met. One provocative argument might understandably be that any support received is valuable, and that no country would want additional assistance to be taken away, a fact which might result in a government’s slowly relinquishing responsibility for tasks that normally are under its purview.

As one of the interviewees in Nigeria stated, such a case would partly be attributable to the positioning of respective clusters. It is important that these be self-critical and ensure from the beginning that while they are in country to offer support, it is in fact the country’s own authorities who must take the lead in the response. One should not forget that clusters are being established at a particular moment, when the capacity of authorities is not sufficient to handle the emergency. Thus, it is already at the beginning of an emergency that the cluster must make clear its time-boundedness and plan its transition and deactivation. As mentioned earlier, a preparedness plan for collaboration in emergency situations is of the utmost importance.

“Education Clusters should give the MoE/the Government enough room for them to believe that it’s up to them, and that they actually are capable to respond. The idea of coordination mechanisms is good because it concentrates a lot of knowledge, analysis, information, synthesis...But we must make sure not to play the role of the MoE, because we’ll eventually end up creating the impression that we are doing things for them”

This comment by one of the interviewees takes us back to the recommendation that much more convincing advocacy is needed to better position EiE as part of the emergency response. Furthermore, as was seen above, the success of a cluster depends on the interplay of many “internal” and “external” factors. It is important to take these into consideration when planning a response and not to forget to move beyond national borders and evaluate the chains of influence prevailing at other levels of intervention. Exactly what this means will be explained in the next chapter.
5. Discussion

“The lack of standardization of assessment and response to needs in crisis situations led to varying levels of service delivery across different contexts. Education service delivery was being conducted in an ad-hoc manner with no standard mechanism to determine which agency or organization should respond or for which types of activities they should be responsible (i.e. child-friendly spaces, life skills activities, teacher training). Government leadership in education was inconsistent and furthermore, there was a lack of agreement about the ways in which ministries international actors should collaborate.”

(Anderson/Hodgkin 2010)

The difficulty of structuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance was shown in previous attempts to implement new coordination mechanisms. From these observations, it was assumed that the cluster approach would be confronted with challenges, too, whose resolution would, to a certain extent, be beyond its purview. Results from this research proved this assumption to be correct.

In order to learn whether the roots of factors influencing the performance of Education Cluster structures in Mali and Nigeria would rather prevail in the coordination mechanism itself, allowing a determination with regard to its adequateness to be made, extensive investigation of internal and external factors was conducted.

While deviations relating to the global structure of the cluster or leading back to the conceptual idea of the cluster approach might be explained by the “means/ends” decoupling approach, deviations (at a lower level of impact) related to day-to-day practical activities might be explained by the “policy/practice” approach.

The strong inter-relatedness of internal and external factors recognized during interviews shows that the roots of a decoupling of the Education Cluster structures’ practical activities from the global cluster approach are difficult to locate within the establishment of the cluster or its external environment. What can be said with certainty, however, is that the latter plays a much more important role in trying to make an assumption on the adequateness of a coordination mechanism such as the cluster approach.

The list of factors categorized as external did not go beyond country level; it can, however, be assumed that interconnectedness of factors inherent to the cluster with factors categorized as external would replicate itself across different spaces between the national level or below (where the cluster approach is implemented) and the global level, where the cluster approach was conceived.

Such factors might, if the definition of “external” is extended to the institutional environment of the Education Clusters in Mali and Nigeria, be, for example, cluster-external frameworks, international policies or any global events such as the Humanitarian Summits mentioned.
This idea of different ‘‘layers’’ of interaction between the local and global level alludes to the field concept by DiMaggio/Powell\(^55\): Education Cluster structures can, along with other clusters, be placed within the field of humanitarian coordination mechanisms. These, again, can be included as separate entities within the humanitarian system. The humanitarian system is part of the world society. Thus, there are several horizontal and vertical relations across these different layers to keep in mind, all of which might have an impact on the different clusters’ work or, in this specific case, the Education Cluster. The functioning of a coordination mechanism such as clusters thereby depends heavily on its relationship to other coordination structures in place. In the present cases, the complexity of influential elements at different levels and within various fields can be illustrated in the following figure.

Illustration 6: From local to global: Coordinating emergency response\(^56\)

As seen here, any coordination system, although conceived at a global level, is ultimately a fragile construct held together by various strands. The investigation of Education Clusters in Mali and in Nigeria thus shows that despite all standardization resulting in a plethora of handbooks, guidelines, 

\(^{55}\) Although it makes it possible to classify the environment of the cluster as fields, the field concept as introduced by DiMaggio/Powell, and despite having been further developed and refined by other colleagues, was considered to have some deficiencies when it comes to describing the humanitarian system, EiE, or the sum of humanitarian coordination mechanisms as ‘‘fields’’.

\(^{56}\) This illustration (made by the author of this paper) shows that there are various intervening elements at the global level, where the cluster approach was created and the national and local level, which is the space where it is implemented. The complexity arising from the interrelatedness of these elements shows that the performance or even adequateness of a mechanism such as the Education Cluster cannot be analysed by looking only at factors inherent in the Education Cluster’s make-up, or by considering only the closest external factors surrounding it.
reference tools and standards, these coordination mechanisms fail to work exactly according to a scheme introduced at a global level, a fact that can partly be explained by the numerous interdependent factors at different levels exercising more or less influence on the outcomes of an emergency response. Related to that, it can be argued that:

**The adequateness of Education Clusters as coordination mechanisms cannot be evaluated without taking into consideration the complex interplay of external factors, stemming from the cluster’s multi-level environment.**

Under these circumstances a decoupling from formal structures is inevitable, which raises the question of how much standardization and rationalization is necessary and at what point they become so overwhelming and processes, rules and regulations so unwieldy and bureaucracy so complex that humanitarian actors decide not to apply them as strictly as they are expected to, knowing that such deviation from expected behaviour (policy/practice decoupling) might result in more efficient outcomes (Bromley/Powell 2012: 33; Meyer/Rowan 1977: 341).

The question of how much structuring is adequate, especially when actors are operating in situations characterised by chaos, such as emergency contexts, could be taken further by asking: is the cluster approach today the adequate mechanism for the coordination of humanitarian response within the ever-changing complex humanitarian system?

According to a statement made in the most recent report by ALNAP on the State of the Humanitarian System (2015), ‘‘...the humanitarian system is at the wrong scale and lacks both the capacity and the agility to meet the multiple demands that have been placed upon it in many crises, while often being hamstrung by external political forces...’’ (2015: 7).

Obviously, and as stated by the persons interviewed for this research, coordination is essential in humanitarian crisis situations (it is better in any case than the status quo, which would mean reverting to the time humanitarian actors intervened in emergency situations in an uncontrolled manner). However, much of the cluster approach’s structure is still being implemented as it was ten years ago, while the challenges it is supposed to tackle have increased in numbers and complexity. A similar observation was made in the ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System Report 2015 with regard to a certain sluggishness of the humanitarian system compared to the current world situation in general.

Of course, there has been some improvement, the report states; however, the humanitarian system seems still not to be able to cope with the ever-changing landscape of crises. Although the cluster approach was only one of the tools introduced to improve delivery of humanitarian response, its establishment (as defined a decade ago) seems not to respond to today’s dynamics, which are typically characterized by means/ends decoupling. For example, the question arises of how a cluster can justify its existence as a temporary mechanism (and try to stick to it) with regard to the fact that a large number of worldwide crises are protracted.
The issue of adequateness is an important one in the case of the Education Cluster, which can be seen as facing additional challenges compared to other clusters. This in turn can be attributed to the ongoing discussion as to its dual nature. It made sense ten years ago, in an attempt to possibly receive more attention and legitimization that the Education Cluster was, thanks to strong advocacy by EiE proponents, almost forcefully drawn into the cluster approach.

As we can see today, however, and as especially highlighted through the two cases investigated in the framework of this paper, the Education Cluster still needs to fight for attention, partly also within the entities that claim to be strong advocates of the topic and that are supposed to collaborate as members of the Education Cluster. From a neo-institutional perspective, this can be explained by the ceremonial authority of belonging to a socially legitimized system. As explained in the theoretical part of this paper, structured entities such as organizations adapt to expectations imposed by their environments under the assumption that their participation in a mechanism aimed at increasing their efficiency might result in greater visibility and an enhanced reputation.

This is why they might want to adapt themselves to a certain role expected of them by their environments and formally participate in entities such as the Education Cluster, at the same time shaping their involvement to fit what their internal agendas require. This might be the reason why there might not be an immediate willingness to align their activities to the requirements of an Education Cluster, which is often established at the onset of an emergency, while several agencies working on education response are already in place and implementing their own agendas.

Now, almost ten years after the inclusion of the Education Cluster into the cluster system, it can be concluded that the participation or alignment of these structures with the cluster approach has not necessarily resulted in the EiE’s getting the attention, importance and resources it might have expected (as underscored by the need expressed by interview partners for yet increased advocacy the topic). One idea to counter some of the challenges Education Clusters in general might experience (according to the experiences in the Mali and Nigeria cases) would be for the EiE field to distance itself once more from the strict structure of the cluster approach.

This might make work easier for clusters working on EiE and provide them with more autonomy in the way they function. This could be by breaking down the core functions of a cluster into a list of activities, and defining a minimum of deliverables each cluster – regardless of the severity of the emergency and worst-imaginable HR situation – should be able to perform. Doing so would justify, for example, why Education Cluster Coordinators might need to underprioritize a given task (meaning: deliver only the minimum needed) when they have other roles to fulfil at the same time. This could also mean

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57 From a sociological neo-institutional perspective, this move to become part of the cluster approach can be explained by mimetic isomorphism, supposing that EiE was expecting the cluster approach to be a promising model for coordinating humanitarian education response (refer to Chapter 2)
abandoning the assumption that processes such as rationalization or professionalization necessarily lead to more efficiency. Before generalizing and stating that the Education Clusters encounter challenges that differ from other sectors, it might be interesting to replicate this study (in a somewhat adapted form) with other thematic clusters. A planned/intended decoupling of Education Clusters from the cluster approach—possibly the development of a “light” version of it—in consultation with the different entities already working on education response, might even be justified and, considering the special nature of the EiE field, even serve as model for the “renovation” of the cluster approach.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The objective of this paper was to investigate, through the cases of Mali and Nigeria, the adequateness of establishing a mechanism to coordinate the provision of education response in emergency situations. It was assumed that a decoupling between the practical implementation of Education Clusters at the national or lower levels and the formal structure of the cluster approach as conceived at the global level would be inevitable, given the complexity of the contexts and range of entities involved at different levels. The analysis of factors identified as potential internal and external influences through a literature review and interviews confirmed this assumption.

At the same time, however, it was shown that the boundaries between these two categories were almost non-existent and that there is a complex interplay between elements inherent in the nature of coordination mechanisms and their external environment. This is an observation also made in a study similar to this one conducted by ALNAP in 2015 on factors supporting or hindering effective coordination within the cluster approach. As a result, none of the hypotheses can be completely confirmed or rejected. The fact that most of the factors identified as being most influential were detected in different publications that appeared years ago creates an urge to discuss the degree of organizational learning within the humanitarian system in general and within the cluster approach in particular.

The external environment of Education Cluster structures in both Mali and Nigeria can be described as consisting of different interrelated fields prevailing at (and bridging) various levels (from the local to the global). Although the organizational field theory serves to a certain extent to place entities following a common goal or sharing similar objectives into groups, it fails to provide a clear definition of how field boundaries can be drawn, which again makes it difficult to differentiate internal from external influences and define their initial origins. What is striking is that in both cases the same factors were identified to be most influential for the work of Education Clusters. The In-country situation, HR

58 This ALNAP study did not focus exclusively on one specific cluster, but rather on the community of clusters. One of the findings was that there was no single factor that would guarantee coordination to be successful because, as in the case of the present investigation, a) many of these factors overlap and b) the heterogeneity of clusters implies different challenges that each cluster has to face so that success factors would not have the same impact everywhere.
Capacity, Prioritization of EiE, Advocacy for EiE, Funding for EiE and Collaboration across levels were perceived as most prevalent – another interesting point is that these factors are closely interrelated.

Noticeable here is that these are elements identified already years ago as influencing the work of the Education Cluster or, in general, the EiE domain. Considering the fact that the extraordinary nature of EiE, at least as perceived within the rest of the humanitarian system, poses challenges to the Education Cluster, which other sectoral clusters might not have, the question arises, ten years after the establishment of the Education Cluster as part of the cluster approach, whether it is not time EiE distances itself again from this imposed formal structure and adapts it, with support of EiE-promoting entities, according to the real needs of the sector. Due to the intense collaboration with other sectoral clusters, some degree of alignment with the existing cluster structure might of course be necessary. While policy/practice decoupling was deemed useful to explain deviances from formal structures such as handbooks and guidelines, the means/ends decoupling approach offers a great explanatory power to discuss the question of whether clusters in general and the Education Cluster specifically are, as conceived ten years ago and despite some reviews attempted to improve its deliverables, still an adequate mechanism in a rapidly evolving world system.

As introduced in the theoretical part of this paper, the urge to create coordination mechanisms can be linked to increased uncertainty as to how to tackle new challenges in the landscape of crises and conflicts within an ever-growing multi-dimensional humanitarian system. World cultural processes such as rationalization, standardization, professionalization and education were expected to bring about stability, predictability and order in a world undergoing major structural changes throughout the 20th century and are thus used in the context of sociological neo-institutionalism to explain the emergence of various phenomena fulfilling imagined needs and expectations of the contemporary society/international community. The cluster approach, or, in general, coordination attempts can be seen as cultural models that are generally acknowledged to fit a “purpose of action”, the structuring of humanitarian action. What these four factors fail to describe is to what extent these world cultural processes promote progress and improvement and at what point a negative turn might occur, resulting in inefficiency and thus, increased decoupling from formal structures.

In future research, it might be interesting to contrast that observation with the sociological neo-institutional argument stating that organizations that incorporate institutionalized myths were more legitimated, successful and likely to survive (Meyer/Rowan 1977: 361). This could be done by comparing entities with greater resources for coordination with those that have less (such as Education Clusters), in order determine whether the former were less likely to decouple practical activities from formal structures. This might also provide an insight into whether entities with more resources really do what they pretend to do, or whether they also need to maintain assemblance of ceremonial authority with respect to their external environment. In general, one might develop an approach to scale the degree
of decoupling and adapt it to the humanitarian system in order to determine at what exact point it fails to respond to formal structures, guidelines and terms of reference supposed to guide its action.

It would also be useful to further develop the catalogue of factors that served as a basis for this empirical investigation to determine whether other Education Clusters, and even clusters in other sectors, experienced similar challenges today. This is especially interesting since most literature focusing on the performance of different clusters is no longer up to date. Furthermore, it might be interesting for the Education Cluster to critically analyse which of the expectations derived from the formal structure imposed by the global cluster approach it is almost unable to fulfil and subsequently to determine to what extent it would be beneficial for the Education Cluster to adapt this structure according to its needs and capabilities in order to increase deliverables in the coordination of EiE. With regard to the advocacy problem the EiE field still encounters it is recommendable to conduct longitudinal studies empirically measuring the added value of EiE.

It is time Education in Emergencies no longer try to uphold ceremonial authority, but acquire real authority and legitimacy and prove the potential of its dual nature, thus serving as a model for a more integrative approach within the humanitarian system – which is more necessary than ever considering the complex components of today’s humanitarian crises.
A) Literature

Handbooks, edited volumes, articles


**Online sources**


67


Talbot, Christoph (2013): Education in Conflict Emergencies in Light of the post-2015 MDGs and EFA Agendas.


**Literature used in the document analysis (Research phase I)**


*Other, case-specific documents:*

Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) report Ukraine (2015):  


Illustration 2: Education Cluster Coordination Structure - Mali

Based on the illustration on the Humanitarian Response website, this is an adapted and slightly extended graphic representation of the Education Cluster coordination structure in Mali. This illustration represents the author of this paper’s view only and does not claim to be comprehensive; rather it should only serve to give an idea of interrelations between main in-country entities engaged with the Education Cluster. More information on the global Education Cluster Management Structure can be found at: https://educationcluster.net/?get=002458%7C2015/04/FINAL_GEC_Strategic_Plan_2015.pdf

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Illustration 4: EiE Working Group Coordination Structure - Nigeria

Based on the illustration pictured on the Humanitarian Response website\(^{60}\), this is an adapted and slightly extended graphic representation of the Working Group coordination structure in the case of Nigeria. This illustration represents the author of this paper’s view only and does not claim to be comprehensive; rather, it should only serve to give an idea of interrelations between main in-country entities engaged with the Education Cluster. More information on the global Education Cluster Management Structure can be found at: https://educationcluster.net/?get=002458%7C2015/04/FINAL_GEC_Strategic_Plan_2015.pdf

**Catalogue of internal and external factors**

**Factors identified in document review (list of documents reviewed can be found in the bibliography)**

N.B.: The table below is merely a working document showing how factors identified in the literature review (phase I), considered to influence the work of clusters, were categorized and analysed during the interviews (phase II).

**How to read the table and notes on content**

This catalogue of factors is based on text passages identified in the document review that mention a different outcome or challenges encountered during the implementation of cluster activities. It is important to note that these evaluations do not focus only on Education Clusters – on the contrary, they refer mostly to the implementation of the cluster approach in general, as well as to other sectoral clusters.

The columns “relevant text passages in documents reviewed” and “source” contain specific indications on the origins of respective factors. These are noted in the column “factors internal/external”. Colors indicate a possible categorization of factors as internal or external. For each factor, there are different indicators that provide information on the prevalence of that specific factor. Each factor may be classified under one or more of the five categories (context, advocacy, management, implementation, working environment) defined to group factors identified via the literature review.

The last two columns contain questions that were formulated in relation to the specific factor, as well as indications on how interviewees responded to it. It is important to note that this table summarizes on the main statements made throughout the different interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Relevant text passages in documents reviewed (if applicable)</th>
<th>Source (document)</th>
<th>Possible questions to interviewees</th>
<th>Statement in interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Education context</td>
<td>Number of schools in place? Number of teachers and learning spaces? Conditions? (‘pre-existing structural deficits?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NIGERIA:</strong> A great part of the problem does not stem from Boko Haram existence, but from a lack of education, teachers, children enrolled. And that is a development problem that the Education Cluster should not tackle, but the government. It is important that the government tells OCHA what they are capable to do, in order for humanitarian actors to decide where they can provide additional support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Security situation</td>
<td>in-country: what kind of emergency context? Protracted or on-set emergency?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MALI:</strong> Protracted crisis; Chronic insecurity, robberies, attacks (however, not so much terrorist attacks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**NIGERIA:**
Not yet classified as protracted crisis; Boko Haram, accessibility problems, suicide bombers


**MALI:**
Willingness to collaborate was relatively high from the beginning; Capacity however not so high: high turn-over rates; from a point of view of the government, emergency education is not a top priority. MoE has to handle many issues simultaneously.

Difficulty: in acute crisis, emergency funding happens ‘automatically’. Once it becomes a protracted crisis, there is competition between emergency actors and development partners to receive attention by the MoE – whose time and capacity after all is limited. The government, not even partner NGOs were used to respond to emergency the way they were staffed. This crisis overwhelmed them. This is why it took much longer to establish the Education Cluster structure; all partners in place where mainly development, not emergency experts. This is why a lot of capacity-building was needed.

**NIGERIA:**
To a certain extent there was reluctance from the government to establish cluster structures, fearing that this would give the country a ‘failed state’ imagine. The MoE however, recognizes the importance of EiE. More and more, cluster coordinators highlight the importance to have a Senior level official from the MoE heading the Cluster – often, these persons have more impact within the rest of the government. Turn-over rate not that high as in Mali. The problem is to increase the understanding on EiE within the government.

At both levels MoEs are part of the education working groups. However, the capacity of the MoE is bounded, because in Nigeria, a lot of decisions made in the area of Education depend on UBEC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Capacity of government to provide response</th>
<th>High vs. low?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any local coordination mechanisms?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>What’s the level of staff turnovers?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Context / working environment</strong></th>
<th>Existing education policies</th>
<th>Existing awareness of the cluster?</th>
<th>How well do you feel was the country context know? What understanding do you need to have about a country, in general, when coming in?</th>
<th>What were advocacy measures?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing awareness of the cluster?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance of education in country?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How well do you feel was the country context know? What understanding do you need to have about a country, in general, when coming in?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What were advocacy measures?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context / working environment</td>
<td>National authorities in place (Actors mapping)</td>
<td>What is the situation? What are the main actors?</td>
<td>MALI:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Education, government, other national authorities → who is there and how is the collaboration in Education? For example in Nigeria, very complex structure with all these LGAs etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The MoE is part of the EC, and takes active role in it. But mostly, these people are Senior staff and there are high turn-over rates. The Ministry needs to take up emergency education into its budgeting. After understanding the importance of emergency education, they need to know it’s something you cannot neglect in the current Malian context of a protracted crisis; There needs to be budget allocated for EiE, only that would be sustainable, because it would not be UNICEF or any other agency imposing its agenda on the Ministry; it’s the Ministry following its work plan. When one of the interviewees was deployed in 2012 – 2013 the MoE was involved from the beginning in EC. Idea was to place a cluster, but few days after coup d’état Establishment of Working group, MoE chaired, and the interviewee (first EC Coordinator in Mali) rather provided technical assistance. The govt. was involved in strategy development from the very beginning</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context / working environment</th>
<th>Education sector working groups in place?</th>
<th></th>
<th>MALI:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are they managed?</td>
<td></td>
<td>First, there was a working group, because the local coordination mechanism was not functioning. Later, this working group was transformed into an education cluster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readiness to collaborate with EC?</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NIGERIA:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes, the government didn’t want them to be called ‘clusters’. The EiE Working Group in Abuja was set up in 2012 and it was in connection to great floodings in South-Western part of Nigeria. It was decided to have it in the capital, to be closer to decision-makers. According to interviewees, it might have been better to establish the center of EiE WG in Borno State, which is much closer to the emergency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context / working environment</th>
<th>Were there any other clusters in place?</th>
<th></th>
<th>MALI:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Education Cluster had its office for a long time at the same place like the WASH, Child Protection (on topics such as attacks on schools, child-friendly psycho-social support,...) and Nutrition Clusters. They discussed regularly about common issues and did some initiatives together, but they could have done much more. Collaboration was not so systematic. It remains a recommendation to be in the same building or compound for a better exchange. Also, recommended to have Save the Children and UNICEF in the same compound, or at least, the Save the Children IM in the same compound as UNICEF is. Collaboration with other clusters often depends on the capacity of OCHA in-country, since it’s the entity aimed at assuring inter-cluster coordination. Often however, clusters reach out to meet with each other themselves, but it should be OCHA’s role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management / advocacy</td>
<td>Understanding / acceptance of the Cluster approach</td>
<td>What are main advocacy strategies?</td>
<td>MALI:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there enough advocacy to explain to different partners, such as the government, local entities, NGOs, community-based organizations, affected populations what the aim of the EC is?</td>
<td></td>
<td>MALI: At that time the local education group, which is the donor group, was not functioning, because some of the key partners didn’t want to work anymore with Malian government because of the coup. The MoE had to understand that the working group set up by the EC had to be the only platform where they could interact with partners and get support technically and financially. At higher level it was well accepted, even though on some political issues they didn’t agree very often, but at the same time the basic principles were clearly understood that this mechanism was needed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The MoE in Mali understood that the EC would be a good mechanism to get donors back on board. However, when partners reviewed their plan to work with the government, they (MoE) paid less attention to the work of the cluster because donors were back.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An understanding of the EC’s work always grows through advocacy. There’s a strong need to start already in-house, by briefing own staff members, who would then serve as multiplicators. It’s also very important to include partners, especially development partners, and also make the link to humanitarian Partners. And towards other un agencies. Say cluster is temporary mechanism, but can feed in the long term.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Structure of EC</th>
<th>Do you feel the cluster was staffed well enough compared to the range of the emergency?</th>
<th>MALI:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s the size of the cluster compared to extent of emergency situation?</td>
<td></td>
<td>MALI: Cluster set-up: National Cluster, Bamako; Cluster Coordinator from UNICEF, Cluster Co-Lead Save the Children. They have clearly defined TORs that reflect the global cluster’s strategy where the UNICEF coordinator was the coordinator and the Save the Children co-lead was the information manager; the MoE is cluster president, that’s important. He holds all the meetings with support from coordinator (see point: ‘national ownership’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition of Ed. Cluster (any RRTs deployed?)</td>
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| NIGERIA: |
| Basic education and EiE are not under MoE, but an agency called UBEC. MoE is higher, so they attend all meetings, but they sort of carry out the mandate together with UBEC, who is involved at both the federal and state levels. UBEC was eager to support the EiE WGs. Recommendation: more training and capacity-building for UBEC. |
| There were other entities who were not aware of the existence of working groups and RRT members deployed in autumn 2016 encouraged them to participate, attend meetings, etc. These entities were both IOs and community-based organizations. |
| Contextual understanding is rather lacking at the side of nationals and international partners who had never put a foot in Maiduguri, who do not know what the situation there looks like. |
At the time the cluster was established, it was well staffed. Right now, the situation is different, but that has something to do with the fact that it’s no longer classified as acute emergency, but protracted.

**NIGERIA:**
When two RRT members were deployed in autumn 2016 there was already a coordinator for the EiE working groups who they assisted with the development of an EiE strategic plan. Having 2 RRTs was considered an advantage because they can dedicate themselves to these specific roles and can also show neutrality.

Sub-national coordination meetings were happening at the time these RRT members arrived, both inter-sectorally and sectorally. They were not so formalized, however, it showed them that at the sub-national level coordination happens more organically than at the national level. Very often it’s the MoEs at subnational level who do much more leadership.

**Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings / coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timing of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization of meetings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Efficiency and effectiveness of meetings is influenced by coordinator’s leadership capacity, scheduling of cluster meetings according to needs, the focus of clusters on concrete operational issues (many clusters seen as ineffective because they remained abstract and not very relevant to concrete activities on the ground).

**Point 4.4 in CAE 2010**

How are meetings conducted? Are there too many? How are they coordinated?

**MALI:**
If the Cluster Coordinator’s main function is Programme Officer, it might be useful to ask someone else from the Coordination Team at UNICEF to join the meeting and represent UNICEF. This would ideally be a Programme Officer, someone with the most relevant title who is responsible for access-related issues, for example. That would allow the Cluster Coordinator to focus on that role and would avoid any suppositions by meetings’ participants that the Cluster Coordinator tries to press forward the view of his employer.

Meetings in Mali are presided by the MoE, the cluster coordinator offers technical assistance only (active role of MoE ensured). However, collaboration between sub-national and national level could be much better; often, the same meetings are taking place at both levels (duplication of discussion) without having mutually consulted before.

**NIGERIA:**
The number of meetings is okay – it’s important to conduct them regularly. But they need to be well-organized and add value. Communication between level had been a problem in Nigeria as well, and also between national level and the GEC – one of the RRT members deployed in autumn 2016 stated that she was supposed to support the establishment of a sub-national level working group. As she arrived in Borno State she found that a such had already been established (although not functioning at its best at that time). This RRT member then invested in establishing good networks at different levels in order to improve the information flow between these entities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Coordination of EC</th>
<th>Sub-national clusters in place?</th>
<th>Coordination mechanisms at sub-national level do not necessarily mirror those at national level, but rather need to be adapted to the specific context. They are in a better position than their national counterparts to adapt the response, incl. priorities to local circumstances.</th>
<th>p. 31, IASC Cluster Coord. Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator deployed from the beginning?</td>
<td>Clear tasks and responsibilities of coordinator?</td>
<td>How did coordinators feel in terms of guidance?</td>
<td>Where there any sub-national clusters in place?</td>
<td>MALI: On paper, there were 5 sub-national clusters. But only 3 are functional. At regional level it's UNICEF who coordinates clusters with regional Education officials (p.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For him- / herself and within cluster?</td>
<td>Skills of coordinator well enough?</td>
<td>Were there any training opp. Available?</td>
<td>How do you feel was the management at sub-national level (from what you heard?)</td>
<td>A certain acceptance from local NGOs towards the cluster helped establish subnational working groups; know local structures, field situation, etc.;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership by UNICEF / Save the Children and collaboration between them?</td>
<td>Coordination capacity?</td>
<td>Turnover question: People who came after him?</td>
<td>what were main issues and do you feel that the points above were met</td>
<td>At the onset of the crisis, since that was the first emergency since a long time, the EC organized some trainings and capacity-building activities. In every meeting, it was important to to include capacity-building activities in the agenda to make sure people were following what they were doing. Those national NGOs were represented at national level and they were able to pass this kind of capacity to the representatives on field and all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any guidance for the coordinator? Guiding elements he could make use of?</td>
<td>Time of deployment? Short-term? Staff turnovers?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of technical and coordination training provided by global clusters to cluster coordinators, cluster co-facilitators and sometimes cluster members</td>
<td>p. 19 in CAE 2010</td>
<td>No general basic and practical guidance for cluster coordinators and critical general elements of guidance are missing</td>
<td>p. 12 in CAE 2010</td>
<td>Often, coord. designed still too junior or not skilled enough. Due to high staff turn-over (which can be related to funding problems) and problems of knowledge management, clusters and their coordinators are not aware of support that has been provided earlier on. Thus, when coordinators leave the country, they often take manuals and information stored on computers with them. (see CAE 2010, 'findings, the functioning of clusters p. 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. 28 in CAE 2010</td>
<td>p. 12 in CAE 2010</td>
<td>4.3 in CAE 2010; apparently, training is judged as useful</td>
<td>p. 28 in CAE 2010</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Mali:**
The current Custer Coordinator had been in Mali before as UNICEF Programme Specialist; the coordinator task was assigned to him when the acting cluster coordinator had left; at that moment, the coordinator role was assigned to him and that was when the double-hatting started. Since he had worked with the prior coordinator before, he knew what these tasks consist of.

The former Chief of Education at UNICEF Mali stated that, it would be helpful for a double-hatting cluster coordinator that his Chief of Section is familiar with emergency education and know what the coordinator role entails in order to better allow the Cluster Coordinator exercise that function, too.

**Nigeria:**
For some time there had been double- or even triple-hatting as well. Currently, there is a Cluster Coordinator at the national level and one at the sub-national level (in Borno State) coordinating both sub-national level clusters. Collaboration between the two works well.
Cluster coordinators at sub-national level?

- Work closely with local authorities and partners
- Support real-time implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan, and address cross-cutting and multidimensional issues arising in the immediate context

Many clusters have dedicated coordinators at national, but not at sub-national level, where the main coordination tasks arise.

This mechanisms that were put in place played an instrumental role at that level to have this structure functioning very well. Because international NGOs are often not present at field-level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>HR capacity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At GEC meeting 2015, it was noted that 'the Education Cluster staff pool is too small, in particular for coordinators. Too little out of the box thinking/solutions for cluster coordination/staffing at sub-national level,'</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MALI: Double-hatting is an issue due to: a) neutrality in cluster coordination when you have to often be in a meeting and speak on behalf of UNICEF and then at the same time switch hats and speak as cluster; b) keeping neutrality vis-à-vis partners. Double-role causes a lot of confusion and mistrust among partners. You end up prioritizing your initial position, because you have to be accountable to your employer, whereas as cluster coordinator, people are happy that someone does the job. Ideally there would be funding for a 100% dedicated coordinator, but reality is that when it’s UNICEF it’s expensive position. Ideally part-time coordinator in context such as protracted crisis, it would be ideal to have a full-time IM. Further, the first Cluster Coordinator stated that the first three months of his deployment were really difficult because he was coordinator and IM at same time. Then, for around 1.5 years, they were well-staffed with a Co-Cluster Coordinator, IM and RRT members. The ideal situation would be to have a dedicated Cluster Coordinator / IM; one can do both, but it also depends on the nature of the emergency: is it at the peak or protracted? Also, it’s costly to finance both. NIGERIA: Proper staffing is very important. Short-term nature of coordinator role might be frustrating for partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Management | (related) |
| Reluctance in implementing cluster approach, there are p.28, CAE 2010 | Were the TORs within the team clear? |
| MALI and NIGERIA: TORs are clear. Normally, those for the Cluster Coordinators at |
Leadership within Cluster

Clear TORs?
Who would rather not assume leadership role (opinion)?

variations in taking the leadership roles, because most managers do not usually have cluster responsibilities in their TOR and often have a development background and are not well informed about cluster activities.

Management / advocacy

Knowledge Mgmt

internal knowledge (situation, context, roles, activities)

Understanding of the country context? Culture?
Values, principles?

Is strategy of the EC clear?

Among cluster partners, lack of participation, reporting, clarity on roles and responsibilities, but also lack of understanding of cluster tools and terminology;

Lack of clarity of roles in cluster architecture: ECWG, ECU, sub-groups, steering group

According to Ukraine CCPM, 3.1, only few partners were involved in the development of the strategic humanitarian response plan.

Global partners to play an important role in ensuring their staff at country level are aware of their agency commitment to cluster, at global and country levels. There was also a suggestion that donors require grantees to participate actively in the cluster, including reporting. GEC Meeting 2015, p. 3

Ukraine CCPM, 3.1

What was missing?
Was strategy of the EC clear?
Understanding of the country context? Culture?
Values, principles?
Participation of cluster partners?
What was their understanding of cluster tools and terminology?
Did they know about roles such as ECWG, ECU, sub-groups, steering group?

MALI:
In Mali, strategic plan was developed with involvement of the MoE, right from the beginning. However, it’s difficult to implement it with an MoE that doesn’t have enough capacity. Emergency education needs to be included in the workplan of the government, needs to be budgeted. Strategic plan can be developed, but always depend on other parties that have a say in it, such as donors or other partners.

NIGERIA:
There was no strategic plan based on a thorough needs assessment for some time, which resulted in a lack of funding, resp. no allocation of financial resources in 2016. By the end of 2016 much work has been done and a plan developed with active involvement of relevant parties at the MoE, partners, incl. HNO and HPC etc. An EiE curriculum (as part of the national Education Strategic plan) is now being pushed forward and should be presented to donors in due time.

Context / working environment

Existing education policies

Relevance of education in country?

*existing awareness? *advocacy strategies?

How well do you feel was the country context know?
What understanding do you need to have about a country, in general, when coming in?

MALI and NIGERIA:
Information level of deployed staff depends on the preparation and capacity of the specific person (which is dangerous).

Management / working environment

Information Management

Are there any suitable IM systems in place?
Information Managers deployed?

In 2010 still problematic. According to IASC guidance, clusters are responsible for information management within

CAE 2010, box 4, p. 46

Are there any suitable IM systems in place?
Information

MALI:
It is recommended to have a full-time IM who puts necessary systems in place, gets information, etc. That’s much more useful than a cluster coordinator, who would just support the national entities in organizing meetings, and liaise between the national and local level.
Understanding in CLAs* on cluster activation and their responsibilities for transition? Alignment between the cluster and existing structures, including MoE sectoral planning? Lack thereof noted in Global Education Cluster Meeting in 2015, p.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Relationship to Global Education Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check-ins Guidance</td>
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</table>

Managers deployed?
Understanding in CLAs* on cluster activation and their responsibilities for transition? Alignment between the cluster and existing structures, including MoE sectoral planning?

The lack of a full-time IM results in the low quality of info available (infographs, maps, etc.)
However, donors put emphasis on coordinator, and less on IM, because they often don’t understand the necessity of IMs (again: understanding of the EC and EiE is often very low)

**NIGERIA:**
Focus of the work of one of the RRT member deployed in autumn 2016 was to put up functioning IM systems. Those were in the end set up in the sub-clusters (which needed to be set up and running) more or less to various degrees of functionality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management / working environment</th>
<th>OCHA: Collab. As inter-cluster coord.</th>
</tr>
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</table>
|                                  | OCHA’s role: ‘At country level, a well-functioning OCHA is critical for making clusters work by providing the framework and infrastructure for coordination. In most cases, however, OCHA has failed to create an effective system of inter-cluster coordination, especially at the strategic level’
Inter-cluster coordination supports clusters to work together to facilitate the delivery of the HRP’s strategic objectives in the most efficient and effective way. The inter-cluster coord. platform is chaired by OCHA and guided by the HCT; it is comprised of Cluster Coordinators 4.5, CAE 2010 IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination |
|                                  | How was...how did you feel the presence of OCHA? |
|                                  | MALI: OCHA is supposed to be inter-cluster coordinators; but depends on who the OCHA inter-cluster coordinator is, in a sense. If there’s good leadership in-country from OCHA, good input can come from them; but if it is weak, it can honestly take too much of their time.
It depends on in-country leadership; there’s a potential to work efficiently, but most of the time, the feeling the cluster receive is that they are working for OCHA. So often, the value added of OCHA is not visible.
OCHA is often understaffed. There was a time OCHA in Mali was not understaffed: when it was a priority country in the west African region, they had a team of information managers, were very well-staffed and had a very ambitious workplan. Again, since the situation changed to a protracted crisis...
Not only OCHA is an important platform, there’s also the UN Country Team (UNCT) that should take a more active role. At least UNICEF can advocate for Education Cluster issues there. ||
<p>|                                  | NIGERIA: OCHA is often overwhelmed and often, the deadlines they set are very last-minute and short-term. Same for meetings. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management / working environment</th>
<th>IASC partners</th>
<th>Collaboration / relationship?</th>
<th>Who were IASC partners in the Mali case? Do you feel they were well involved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Is there an exit strategy in place?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Transition of Cluster to dormant status?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>(CAE, 2010, p.12)</strong></td>
<td><strong>This question was not asked like that, however, most interviewees stressed the importance to have an exit strategy right from the moment cluster structures are established. It is important that relevant parties (such as the MoE etc.) know about and understand that exit / transition plan.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management / implementation</strong></td>
<td>Monitoring of Cluster Coordination</td>
<td>a) Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) b) Cluster Coordination Architecture Review (by OCHA)</td>
<td><strong>Cluster coordination aims to strengthen the organization of the international humanitarian community and to make it more accountable to affected people’. Methods to cluster coordination measurement: (1) Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) is a self-assessment of cluster performance in terms of the six core cluster functions and accountability to affected people (2) Cluster Coordination Architecture Review – an HC-led review, undertaken on an annual basis at a minimum, which, which examines the continued</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CCPM report, point 2.1 IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination (p.34)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do you feel cluster performance was efficiently implemented according to the above-mentioned mechanisms? (yes / no).</strong> <strong>If no: How do you feel the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be facilitated?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MALI:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Again, if there’s a dedicated cluster coordinator, this can be done. But it’s rather realistic if you have a double- or triple-hatting cluster coordinator. At the time the cluster in Mali was well-staffed they were able to complete the CCPM. They also involved partners who provided crucial input in terms of knowledge and capacity to complete the CCPM.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management / implementation</td>
<td>Strategic Measurement</td>
<td>As highlighted in Strategic Plan 'operational measurements will be made by the country education clusters at the end of a cluster activation or in quarter 4 of each year and sent to the ECU for analysis</td>
<td>See Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019: p. 11 (not necessary, connection to strategic plan question) How to make national clusters more accountable? (see strategic plan 2015 – 2019)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions related to the IASC core functions, as highlighted in the Cluster Coordination Performance Management (CCPM) form

| Management / advocacy / working environment | Knowledge of the cluster’s mandate in country? Ways to share information? | According to CCPM Ukraine (2016) mapping of partners and activities exist but are not always used to support decision making. Cluster activities are not coordinated enough with IASC Core functions, point ‘Supporting service delivery’ (1.2 ➔ Develop mechanisms to Inclusion of national authorities was already a point reflected in the first evaluation of the Cluster Approach (IASC, 2010): why |

| MALI: | There was a complete disconnect between the national and sub-national levels; both within the cluster but also visible within the MoE. There’s a disconnect between the MoE in Bamako and regional authorities, which is also reflected in coordination. Too many turnovers, again, cause the necessity for trainings. It’s important to mention in TORs what the cluster is and does, and what not. This makes it easier for partners and other entities to collaborate. At some point, it was the same situation for national NGOs at some point same situation, but they were more receptive; because they knew what was going on in the field and they were like ‘we don’t know how to deal with it, if someone wants to help us respond to this situation?’ |

| CCPM, core function 2. Informing decision-making to the HC / HCT for the humanitarian response 2.1 Needs assessment and gap analysis (across other sectors and within the sector) | Indicator: Use of assessment tools in accordance with agreed minimum standards, individual assessment / survey results shared and / or carried out jointly as appropriate | |
| **Management** | Engagement of HC? / Information / Reporting to the HC | Weak accountability to the HC, mainly because of the lack of time to engage in cluster activities; also HC’s do often not have strong humanitarian background and therefore lack relevant expertise and interest. In Ukraine CCPM 2015: the Cluster did not have joint nor harmonized education assessment (cross-organizations); Partners may not have been enough informed about the goals of the cluster and might therefore lack understanding of issues related to needs assessment in this CCPM response. |
| Management / implementation | Analysis to identify and address (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication, and cross-cutting issues | (2.2) Analysis to identify and address (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplications, and cross-cutting issues. Indicator: Joint analysis for current and anticipated risks, needs, gaps and constrained. |
| Management / implementation | Prioritization, needs analysis | (2.3) Prioritization, grounded in response analysis. Indicator: Joint analysis supporting response planning and prioritisation in short and medium term. |

| | national authorities and supporting them in coordination. Partners need to improve information sharing to avoid duplication of activities. | avoid duplication of service delivery. |

| | has’t that improved? What are mechanisms in place to involve respective partners in cluster activities? | CAE 2010: 5.3 |
| | | CCMP 2015: 2.1 |

| Management / implementation | Analysis to identify and address (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication, and cross-cutting issues | How well are for example education department representatives involved in the process of analysis of needs and constraints on regular basis? |
| Management / implementation / working environment | Prioritization, needs analysis | How are needs, gaps and constrained being analysed? Do partners use a specific needs analysis (a separate one) to inform their programming or is there a joint one? |

| NIGERIA: | | There should be such an analysis, otherwise there are duplications. They should do the needs assessment together (partners working on EiE). And needs-assessment is individual. Cluster should operate as strategic hub for all partners. |

<p>| MALI: | | The Ministry’s developing the 10 year destinal ‘programme de sénat de l’éducation’. Because of emergency there’s an interim 3-year strategy that has been extended but ultimately, the country strategy is driven by ext. donors and not the Ministry of Education who largely fund that work plan. You have external donors, in Mali, esp. the French. All the major education sector donors that are very much influence the country strategy and |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>CAE 2010, 13</th>
<th>usage of existing national standards?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>setting priorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>budget. And for a lot of them emergency education is not something they see as something they would want to prioritize. According to the first Cluster Coordinator in Mali, although one couldn’t see it in budget planning, Education was prioritized at a political level; but since there was no strategy at that moment (the last had ended right before the coup), donors didn’t want to invest money, that’s why the gov. in first place accepted the cluster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projecting global standards to local conditions or helping create local standards</td>
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</table>

**CCPM, Core function 3. Planning and strategy development**

| 3.1 Develop sectoral plans, objectives and indicators directly supporting realization of the HC / HCT strategic priorities |  |
| Indicator: Strategic plan based on **identified priorities shows synergies with other sectors against strategic objectives**, addresses cross cutting issues, incorporates exit strategy discussion and is developed jointly with partners. Plan is updated regularly and guides response. |  |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Planning and strategy development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3.1] In Ukraine CCPM: Linkages to overall strategy are unclear for partners and there are gaps in partners understanding of linkages between different strategies and objectives: organization, cluster, HRP. Explanation possible: high turnover in cluster meeting attendants. Only few partners were involved in the development of the strategic humanitarian response plan.</td>
<td>Is there a strategic plan, or at least a plan covering priorities and gaps identified (see above)?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MALI:</strong> (see question on strategic plan)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NIGERIA:</strong> The idea was to update the existing strategic plan. Strategic plan is absolutely crucial, every cluster needed to have a strategic plan. And the heart of every strategic plan should be the strategic framework.</td>
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| 3.2 Application and adherence to existing standards and guidelines |
| Indicator: Use of existing national standards and guidelines where possible. Standards and guidance are agreed to, adhered to and reported against. |  |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context / Management / implementation / working environment</th>
<th>Monitoring of national / international standards on place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3.2] In Ukraine CCPM: Existence of international and national standards acknowledged, but partners were not able to use them due to lack of resources (funds, specialists, experience) or they are not adapted to the local context. High turnover in cluster meeting attendants also reflected a rather unsatisfactory score.</td>
<td>This point is related to one of the above on resource capacity and prior monitoring of existing national standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management / implementation / context</td>
<td>Contingency planning / preparedness</td>
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NIGERIA: Very little in Nigeria (in 2016, at time of deployment of RRTs). On a local level there was, according to one of the RRT member, a certain feeling of complete independence from decision-makers in Abuja; that’s a big problem because donors and meetings usually take place in Abuja. An idea would have been to move the hub of the national cluster / working group to Maiduguri. Knowledge gap btw. national and local working group is a dichotomy the RRT members stated not to know how to address. At times, similar meetings were taking place at a state level as in Abuja. There were local governmental authorities meeting with the UN and NGO and one not informing the other. There was not enough collab. or coordination between those bodies. Situation seems to be improving, according to current EiE WG Coordinators.
## 7. Accountability to affected population

**Indicator:** Disaster-affected people conduct or actively participate in regular meetings on how to organise and implement the response; agencies have investigated and, as appropriate, acted upon feedback received about the assistance provided

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<th>Strategic measurement</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In Ukraine CCPM 2016 this point was rated unsatisfactory; stating that the discussion on a joint acc. Mech. Has not yet taken place; also, coordination and communication between different levels (national-regional), and various actors (cluster, authorities, NGOs, IOs, communities) was very weak (see point 7).</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;As highlighted in the Education Cluster Strategic Plan (2015-2019) operational measurements will be made by the country education clusters at the end of a cluster activation or in quarter 4 of each year and sent to the ECU for analysis</td>
<td><strong>CPM 2016, point 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;See Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019: p. 11</td>
<td><strong>Mali:</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;At the time the first Cluster Coordinator was deployed, the AAP question was just being discussed. There was no proper mechanism to do it yet and also, accessibility to the North was very difficult for the EC. It was important to collaborate with local NGOs based in the North in order to create surveys and let them gather the information. As a tool they decided to use a UNICEF monitoring mechanism. Knowing that this one was reliable and would cover around 60 – 80% of the information needed, it would offer a good way to monitor what the needs of affected communities were.</td>
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| **Context** | **In general: local structures, collab.** | **"level of engagement?"** | **Mali and Nigeria:**<br><br>see actor mapping and local coordination mechanisms in place. |

In general: local structures, collab.
### Management / working environment / advocacy

**Beneficiaries**
- Interest?
- Involvement?
- Commitment?

| Participation as a necessary, but not sufficient element for strengthening accountability to affected populations. Clusters can provide a clear point of contact and forum for linking international humanitarian actors to national and local authorities and civil society. To date (2010), clusters have largely failed to integrate national and local actors appropriately and thereby undermined national ownership. | CAE 2010: 60 | Interest?
Involvement?
Commitment? |

**Mali and Nigeria**
- Community-based organizations are in general willing to get involved. Actually, locals understand pretty well what the cluster aims at, often much more than government authorities.

### Management / working environment / implementation

**Integration of national and local actors**
- Acknowledgement and consideration of national ownership?

| Clusters largely exclude national and local actors and often fail to link with, build on, or support existing coordination and response mechanisms. Among other reasons, this is due to insufficient analysis of local structures and capacities before cluster implementation, as well as a lack of clear transition and exit criteria. | CAE 2010: 9, 37, 38 | Acknowledgement and consideration of national ownership? |

**Mali and Nigeria**
- This depends on the level of advocacy that is being done to raise awareness on the importance of EiE. At times, there were organizations they couldn’t get on board because of the severity of the security situation. Another reason for not being able to have organizations involved in EiE is their lack of financial resources (applies mostly to smaller NGOs).

**Mali**
- It is very important to involve these actors (and it is being done). Although those national NGOs developed some kind of coping mechanisms to respond to these challenges along with the
and strategies. (page 9, CAE and also p. 37 and 38)

Communities, they were still in need for technical expertise / support and financial support. At some points, they accepted the mechanism and played a vital role in the existence of the working group at that time. For example in the North the EC couldn’t access at the very beginning; those local NGOs were the cluster’s ‘eyes’ there, and they helped share and get a lot of information in the North.

At times (especially at the onset of the emergency), the government was a little reluctant to involve communities. The government feared that in some communities, and even in some local NGOs (mainly Gao, Kidal and Tomboutou) there were groups of people involved in the conflict. The Cluster played a crucial role in ensuring the communication btw. MoE and communities improved.

NIGERIA:
Members of the EiE Working Group are international NGOs, faith-based organizations and civil society organizations, also community-based organizations. Yet in 2016 there were, due to the missing strategic plan, only very little members. RRT members deployed in autumn 2016 stated that a great part of their activities consisted in mobilizing new members, which included investing in advocacy.

MALI:
At the very beginning, there was an NGO coordination mechanism in-place who were rather working on development issues with the government and not engaged in EiE at all. This group was first reluctant to collaborate with the cluster, thinking that it would cover the same mandate as they were already doing.

As for donors: those need to be on board from the beginning. It is important to show them the importance of EiE. Funding should not be earmarked, donors should not only give emergency funding, which is spent too fast.

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<td>Relationship with</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Donors</td>
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<td>- Other local entities not specifically providing EiE</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Have they been assessed?</td>
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<td>Are they being integrated?</td>
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The local coordination mechanism funded by donors, which was set inactive at the time of the coup d’etat, is functioning again and cluster activities are being integrated. The MoE definitely has an incentive to hold coordination meetings and goal is to integrate both clusters at national and regional level to become sub-working groups of local coordination mechanisms.
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<td><strong>often have insufficient capacities for taking over responsibility;</strong></td>
<td><strong>international actors have few incentives to integrate with existing mechanisms;</strong></td>
<td><strong>cluster approach seeks to enhance predictability, thus, there is less flexibility for adapting to local circumstances; lack of coordination with UNDAC.</strong></td>
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Interview guidelines

Broad structure of interviews

*Length: 45 – 60 minutes*

**Education Cluster in [Name of Country]**

1. **Contextual framework**
   a. Regarding your function and deployment to the Education Cluster (EC) [Name of Country]
   b. Establishment and composition (structure, size) of the EC [Name of Country]
   c. In-country situation thus far (government, other clusters in place, sub-clusters, other stakeholders in the field of education, collaboration with various entities)

2. **The EC in [Name of Country]**
   a. Mission of the EC in Nigeria / focus of activities
   b. Your opinion (open question): External elements influencing planned implementation of activities (these may be political, cultural, related to beneficiaries, external perception of the EC, …)
   c. Your opinion (open question): Internal elements influencing planned implementation of activities (set-up of cluster, structural difficulties, unclear tasks, distribution of roles, etc.)
   d. Do you think internal factors prevail over external ones? Which could have a stronger impact on the education response?

3. **Review of factors found via document review**

In this part of the interview, questions relating to internal and external factors identified as having been influential for different clusters’ work in previous years, will be asked. The interview partner will be asked to share his / her opinion on whether or not he or she thought these factors also prevailed in the Mali or Nigeria Education response during the time he or she was there. This would make it possible to draw an assumption regarding: a) lessons learned from previous experience; b) the relevance of eventually neglected elements that exercise an influence on the cluster’s work
4. **Looking back and going forward**

After reviewing the list of factors, new ones will eventually come to mind. I would be happy if, in this last part, you could share your thoughts on the following:

a. Looking back after several years: what do you think could have been done differently in [Name of Country]? Could the factors identified above have been controlled or anticipated?

b. What is your personal opinion on the Cluster Approach in general as a coordination mechanism? (pro’s and con’s; up to 5 points for each)

c. Going forward: Any recommendations you would like to share to make the work of clusters more efficient?

5. **Closing/comments/remarks**

6. **Example of other questions**

Other questions were included throughout the interviews, but mainly based on the catalogue of factors.
Interview partners (Research phase II)

Interviews conducted: 27 January – 25 February 2017

Special thanks goes out to all interview partners for the Mali and Nigeria case studies:

MALI


**Evans Atis**: first Education Cluster Coordinator in Mali (starting 2012), now based in CAR. Interview conducted on 1 February 2017.


NIGERIA


**Charles Michael Mwangi**: Current EiE Working Group Coordinator, Maiduguri (Borno State). Interview conducted on 25 February 2017.


OTHER INTERVIEWEES


**Sabina Handschin**: former Education Cluster Coordinator in DRC; currently Education Advisor at Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Berne. Interview conducted on 22 February 2017.