

Exchange on Area-based coordination with Shelter Cluster Coordinators

Online Session held the April 30, 2024

Agenda and presenters

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Participants (43): Adriana (Sudan SC), Ammar (Türkiye SC), Angel Pascual (GSC), Anicet (Mali SC), Behrooz (Ukraine SC), Chiara Vaccaro (DRC), Ela (IFRC), Bill Flinn (CARE), Francesca (Cameroon SC), Francisco (GSC), Giulia (IMPACT), Yodit (Ethiopia SC), Muhammad (Afghanistan SC), Mohamed Hilmi (Interaction), Hussien (GSC), Jackie (Myanmar SC), Jamie (CRS), John Wain (Ukraine SC), Laschoni (DRC SC), Lilian (South Sudan SC), Lio (Philippines SC), Lizzie Babister (GSC), Madeleine Mara (GSC), Mahamat (Nigeria SC), Mamen (GSC), Manish (Nepal SC), Mohammad Baqir (Afghanistan), Mohammed Alamir (NW Syria), Mohammed Juma (Somalia SC), Pablo Medina (GSC), Robbie (GSC), Seki Hirano (GSC), Sendralahatra (Lala – DRC SC), Stephanie Loose (GSC), Maire-Pier (Haiti SC) +9 unidentified users

Framing the topic

The shelter sector has been discussing area-based coordination (ABC) and area-based approaches (ABA) for programming for a long time, understanding that people affected by crises need multi-sectoral support. The Urban Settlement Working Group, starting around 2019, gathered case studies on effective [urban response strategies](#), emphasizing the importance of multi-sectoral, context-tailored interventions. Global guidance, such as the [Settlements Approach Guidance Note](#) has been developed to standardize this approach, which has gained renewed attention recently as a solution in humanitarian responses. Numerous recent documents and initiatives, such as the [ERC flagship initiative](#), highlight area-based approaches as essential. The sector seeks to clarify the definition and practical implementation of area-based coordination to support programmatic efforts effectively.

Reality check

- Ukraine

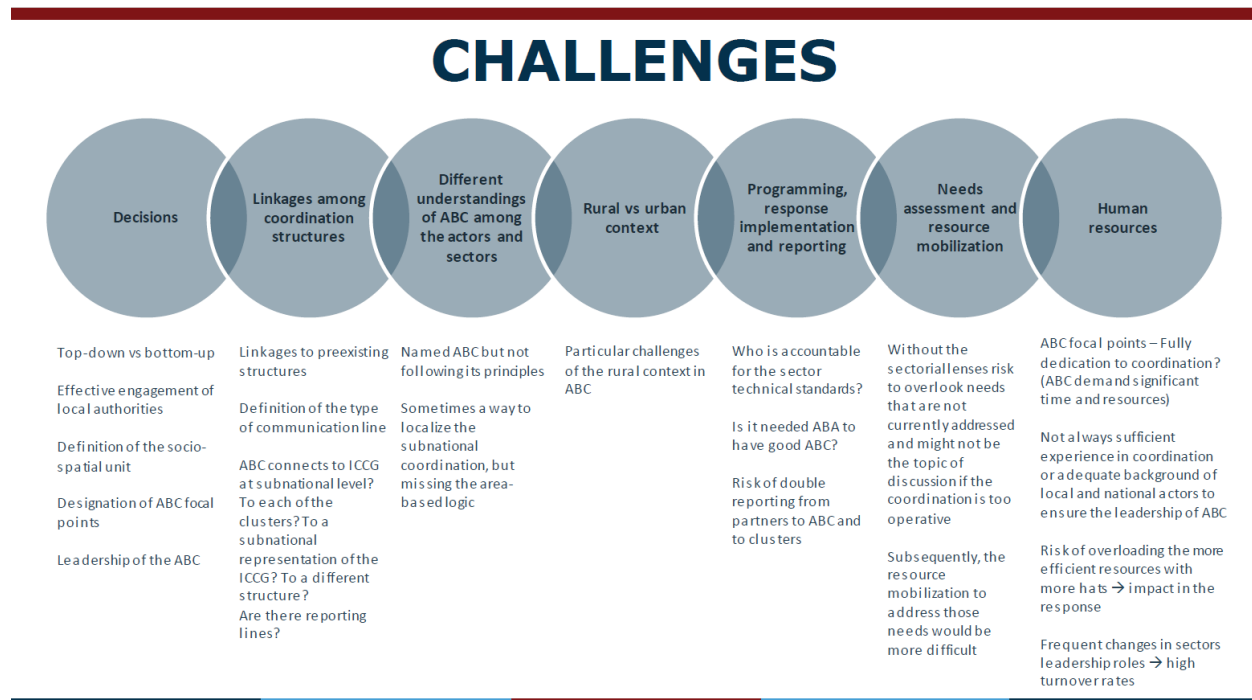
To frame the discussion on area-based approaches in Ukraine, the context of the full-scale Russian invasion in March 2022 needs to be considered. The Shelter Cluster, transitioning its responsibilities to local authorities and development actors, had to rapidly scale up its operations. Despite establishing a national office and sub-national hubs, criticisms arose about the centralized nature of the cluster system. This led to the creation of an area-based coordination task force and the current hiring of a consultant to explore an area-based coordination model. The big challenge lies in defining and implementing this model while ensuring the continuity of technical expertise and transitioning responsibilities effectively.

- Türkiye

In Türkiye, before the February 2023 earthquake, the coordination mechanisms focused on refugee response and operated under the 3RP framework, but there was no cluster nor cluster-like mechanism. Following the earthquake, a cluster-like approach was adopted for internal displacement response coordination, and in August 2023 started the establishment of an area-based coordination platform. However, this platform lacked a framework and funding mechanism, which hindered its effectiveness. The ABC approach struggled to provide tangible benefits, often creating confusion and inefficiency due to its generalist nature. At present, the trend is towards reverting to more sector-focused coordination.

Challenges

Some of the challenges shared by the coordinators in a preparatory survey (see below) when preparing this exchange were organized in the below slide under different following thematic areas (this is not an exhaustive list of challenges or thematic areas, simply the ones shared so far).



Survey questions

What could be done regarding this topic at global level to support your work? (Actions at global level)

What could the GSC support team do to support your work regarding this area? (Country support actions)

How do you propose that we continue collectively advancing in this topic?

Would you like to participate in a session dedicated to ABC during the coming Shelter Week?

(Results in the pdf attached)

Comments/questions from participants for future discussions

The comments made by the participants during this session could be grouped in these 5 areas:

Coordination Overlap and Effectiveness: There is confusion about the roles and integration of area-based coordination (ABC) with existing sub-national clusters, leading to overlap and inefficiency. Particularly, there is a concern on the risk of duplicated efforts in reporting and monitoring the progress of the response.

Gaps Addressed by ABC: It's unclear what specific gaps ABC is intended to fill within the existing cluster coordination architecture and whether it effectively advances a multisectoral approach.

Engagement with Local Governance: There are challenges in engaging and strengthening existing governance mechanisms, particularly in terms of community engagement and empowerment.

Context-Specific Application: The relevance and implementation of ABC vary by context, with different levels of success and involvement from OCHA and local actors in countries like South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Nigeria.

Durable Solutions: There is a recognized potential for ABC to contribute to durable solutions by bridging humanitarian and development efforts, though practical implementation and structural support and best practices are lacking or are currently just being piloted.

