Strategic Plan
2015-16
When donors contribute USD$100 for a food security intervention in any given crisis, US$0.28 is required to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated, efficient and effective response.
About 805 million people in the world, or one in nine, suffer from hunger, according to the State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI 2014), confirming a positive trend which has seen the number of hungry people decline globally by more than 100 million over the last decade.

This is a significant achievement in spite of the frequency and severity of devastating droughts, floods and storms as well as destruction and suffering resulting from complex human-induced emergencies, civil strife and the collapse into chaos of shattered countries.

Food Security Clusters and sectors are already helping to coordinate food security responses in more than 30 countries that have been affected by large-scale natural disasters, conflicts or protracted crises. According to the Global Humanitarian Appeal 2015, some 77.9 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. Over 25 million people need food security interventions, either through food assistance or agriculture and livelihoods support. Some US$4 billion is necessary in order to address most urgent food security-related needs.

The FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014) recognises the benefit of food security coordination. However, these achievements are fragile and at risk of being turned back if sustained funding to ensure adequate food security coordination is not available in a more predictable manner against the Strategic Plan 2015-16.

At country-level, food security coordination costs only 0.28 percent of the total food security sector humanitarian appeals in 2015. When donors contribute US$100 for a food security intervention in any given crisis, US$0.28 is required to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated, efficient and effective response (including timeliness, reducing overlaps and gaps, beneficiary based needs assessments, targeting and accountability to affected population).

As Co-Lead Agencies of the global Food Security Cluster, we re-affirm our strong commitment to coordination principles whereby humanitarian organizations should be accountable to affected people for their performance with the ultimate aim to serve vulnerable people effectively.

**Dominique Burgeon**
Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**Stefano Porretti**
Director of Emergencies
World Food Programme
Meeting growing and evolving humanitarian challenges requires partnerships and effective use of scarce resources.

According to the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014), the food security coordination mechanisms assessed made consistent, positive contributions by facilitating networking and helping to build trust; reducing duplication of efforts; enhancing reporting; and, in some cases, setting and disseminating standards. By avoiding duplication and enabling humanitarian organizations to redirect resources, food security coordination had a positive effect on the coverage of services provided.

Photo: Victoria Cavanagh/WFP
Introduction

In 2015, 77.9 million people are in need of aid and 57.5 million of them are targeted by humanitarian assistance in 22 countries. Over the past ten years the number of people in need has multiplied by four, when donor contributions have only doubled. In 2013, the funding gap was 44 percent of the global appeal.

This entails that humanitarian partners have to deliver more with proportionally fewer resources. Meanwhile the average requirement for humanitarian assistance in UN-coordinated appeals between 2012 and 2014 has increased from US$110 to US$204 per target beneficiary. The global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) Strategic Plan 2015-2016 has been developed with this reality in mind. The Plan acknowledges emerging challenges related to multiple Level 3 system-wide emergencies as well as the changing humanitarian equation, in other words more frequent, more expensive and more complex and protracted crises.

Building on the large and diverse expertise of cluster partners, the Strategic Plan was formulated through a combination of remote and face-to-face consultations. The strategy also reflects the lessons learned from the past four years, as documented by the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014).

Background

gFSC became operational in April 2011 as the eleventh global Cluster under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) architecture. It is jointly led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and represents a partnership of approximately 48 institutions from the UN, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The gFSC’s objective is to ensure a more predictable and comprehensive response to food insecurity in humanitarian crises. Through the Food Security Cluster approach, humanitarian actors’ activities are coordinated and gaps are identified, including in the transition from food assistance to longer-term food security programming. The Cluster is responsible for providing overall standards and guidance to develop emergency strategies and implementation plans at country-level. These plans complement and support national authorities’ existing efforts to address key food security issues related to availability, access and utilization in a timely and effective manner.

Since starting its operations in 2011, the gFSC Support Team has provided direction to country-level clusters by developing tools and guidance, conducting trainings and providing surge support. It has also provided a comprehensive communication outreach within the Cluster, with partners and with the wider humanitarian community.
“To ensure improved, coordination of preparedness, response and recovery actions at national and global levels”
Vision, Mission Statement and Values

The vision of gFSC is that:

“Food security needs for individuals and communities in humanitarian crises are met.”

The vision is supported by a mission statement:

“To ensure improved coordination of preparedness, response and recovery actions at national and global levels.”

The gFSC aim is to strengthen food security responses in crises situations, mainstream early recovery approaches and enhance national capacity to:

- deliver predictable and accountable leadership and coordination on food security responses;
- strengthen existing national and local humanitarian management and coordination systems, building on local capacities through the active participation of women and men from the affected population; and
- optimise collaboration and partnerships with governments, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donors and other stakeholders to ensure a holistic response.

gFSC is committed to ensuring that humanitarian response planning and implementation take into account appropriate standards, indicators and cross-cutting issues, in addition to targeting the most vulnerable within the affected populations. gFSC will address food security related, key cross-cutting issues in policies and decision making processes, as well as implement the latter in humanitarian response operations.
A light structure based in Rome and funded at 47 percent by Co-Lead Agencies WFP and FAO, with a network of partners worldwide using their own resources to reinforce global food security expertise.
The gFSC Support Team is composed of five staff from WFP and FAO professional categories, along with finance and administrative support experts all funded from agencies’ own budget. In addition, a Junior Professional Officer is currently funded by the government of Finland and consultants are sponsored out of extra-budgetary resources.

Moreover, the gFSC Support Team is often enriched by secondments of staff from global partners. Global partners are directly leading some specific gFSC activities and stand-by partners provide an invaluable contribution for surge deployments in the aftermath of disasters.

The graph below provides information on the different categories of stakeholders involved in gFSC and the strategic areas in which they are engaged.
The strategic direction for 2015-16 is building on achievements since 2011 and is informed by the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014)
Results and Objectives

The below short description of the six strategic Results and related objectives should be read in conjunction with the more detailed gFSC workplan for the period of 2015-16 that has been developed as a separate matrix of activities with related indicators.

Result 1 - Strengthened and developed national clusters’ capacity

Historically, coordination was interpreted as sharing information and documenting who is doing what and where (and when). With the Transformative Agenda and the centrality of Accountability to Affected Populations as an overarching objective, clusters’ requirements shifted to more comprehensive obligations. By now, cluster coordination is supposed to ensure that international responses to humanitarian emergencies are clearly led and accountable, aiming to make the international humanitarian community a better partner for the affected people. Clusters are supposed to be proficient in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), programme formulation, needs assessments and planning of work.

Furthermore, and as highlighted by the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014), engagement with national authorities needs to be strengthened, including through preparedness capacity building and through the establishment of modalities and conditions to hand over coordination to host governments. This requires additional expertise that is being built under this Result.

Objective 1: Cluster coordinators’ skills are broadened

While the IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module outlines the basic elements of cluster coordination in non-refugee situations, gFSC will keep providing support to country clusters through trainings and backstopping. These trainings will cover a wide range of topics, including technical food security assessments and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making and strategy formulation. Trainings will also enhance participants’ leadership skills, including facilitation, effective decision making, promoting a timely and sustainable response, as well as advocating for participatory approaches. Through global and regional-level trainings, gFSC intends to identify and build the capacity of more experts ready to be deployed to humanitarian emergencies.

Objective 2: Country clusters’ training demands are met

In addition to process-oriented trainings (captured under objective 1), ad-hoc and country-level training requirements will be identified through regular discussions with country clusters. Tailored training solutions will be provided either through the gFSC’s existing expertise (including but not limited to AAP) or through cluster lead agencies’ and partners’ mechanisms.

Objective 3: Consolidating ready-to-use tools

To support rapid deployments and effective coordination solutions for country clusters or sectors, briefing packages for cluster coordinators will be updated. This will involve revising the Food Security Cluster Handbook and updating and developing gFSC tools and Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs).
Objective 4: Country clusters are adequately supported and backstopped

Food Security Clusters at country-level have to adapt to a highly volatile working environment and often to a rapid turn-over of staff and partners. These challenges call for a regular review of the coordination modalities and rapid adaptive capacity. Through regular teleconferences (with over 30 countries) and field missions when necessary, the gFSC Support Team will assist country clusters in performing their tasks and to ensure relevance, responsiveness and programme quality. In 2014, the gFSC Support Team conducted 28 surge and support missions of an average of 17 days each.

Objective 5: Country clusters’ awareness and capacity on issues related to preparedness and resilience programming are strengthened

Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning is one of the core functions of a cluster or a sector at country-level. Lack of resources at country and global levels over the past years have, however, prevented the countries from being adequately equipped with tools and guidance to fully undertake this function. Over the course of the next two years, it is the gFSC intention to hire preparedness experts to work on this core area in line with the IASC Common Framework for Preparedness. Preparedness experts seconded from partner organizations will capitalize on their experiences and resources to develop cluster-led policies, lessons learned and good practices on preparedness.

Objective 6: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed and/or updated

Over the past years, the gFSC developed SOPs for key functions, such as pre-deployment of staff to country clusters, deployment of cluster coordinators to country clusters, management of Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs), management of surge support missions, programme quality and evaluation. These SOPs will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. New SOPs will be developed as needed.

Result 2 - Harmonised and globalised information management system

There is a consensual recognition of the critical role information management plays in shaping effective humanitarian response, coordination and decision making. Quality information reaching more humanitarian actors results in better coordination and better decision making, thus improving the response to beneficiaries as well as accountability to donors.

Building on the significant work that has been accomplished in 2013-14 with regards to the establishment of global information platforms and tools, such as the foodsecuritycluster.net website and the FSC Information Management (IM) Tool, the information management Result for the period of 2015-16 will primarily focus on the roll-out, maintenance and enhancement of the existing global tools and information systems, as well as on training country-level information management officers. This will be complemented by creating a standardized information management briefing package.

Objective 1: Deployed and deployable Information Managers are systematically trained on FSC IM functions and tools

There is a need to strengthen the pool of expertise and national capacity in information management. This will be achieved by organising face-to-face IM trainings, through which participants gain an understanding of the core IM concepts and how the IM tool, developed in 2014, can be used to
facilitate IM functions. At the end of the trainings participants will be able to manage and use the FSC IM tool in their respective clusters.

Remote IM capacity building will be facilitated through the development of an IM e-learning package. In 2015-16 gFSC is planning to roll out the IM tool in the Food Security Clusters and sectors worldwide, giving strategic priority to Level 3 emergencies.

**Objective 2: Information management tool support system is developed and rolled-out**

In support of the roll-out of the IM tool, a “help-desk” service for country clusters, a technical maintenance system and the IM Tool hosting system will be developed and maintained.

**Objective 3: Information Management briefing package is developed and disseminated**

An updated package that includes basic guidance and reference documents as well as standardised templates for IM and cluster activities to be ready to use in sudden onset emergencies will be developed.

**Objective 4: Website and social media platforms are maintained and updated**

In order to share information among the humanitarian actors, both at the field and at the headquarters level, the global Support Team is currently maintaining Food Security Cluster website, running at [http://foodsecuritycluster.net](http://foodsecuritycluster.net). Social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook and Yammer, are also being used by the gFSC. These platforms will be maintained and continuously tailored to meet the partner and country cluster needs. Based on user feedback from both country clusters and partners, it is planned that the current Food Security Cluster website is enhanced to better cater for efficient information management.

**Objective 5: gFSC performance is monitored yearly**

As a good practice, gFSC will maintain a yearly performance review through an online survey in addition to the feedback collected at the global partners’ meetings.

**Objective 6: Country cluster performances are adequately monitored**

In line with the IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module, gFSC will promote that country cluster performances against the six core cluster functions are regularly monitored. To that effect, gFSC will provide administrative services to the online survey tool that was developed in 2014.

**Objective 7: gFSC IM system is cross-fertilised with other clusters**

gFSC is increasingly seeking to strengthen collaboration and partnerships with other global clusters and institutions. As capacity and expertise are being built over time, gFSC continues to participate in IM working group activities at inter-cluster level.

**Objective 8: Connectivity and networking is provided to country clusters**

In the coming two years, gFSC plans to keep providing foodsecuritycluster.net e-mail addresses and troubleshooting support to country clusters.
Timely response is critical for effective humanitarian action. However, deploying the right person at the right time remains a great challenge. The purpose of Result 3 is to be more predictable, consistent and timely in addressing coordination requirements at field level, drawing on the gFSC Support Team’s own capacity, the gFSC roster, Cluster Lead Agencies and global and stand-by partners.

Objective 1: Country clusters’ staffing needs are timely met

In 2014 the global Support Team members have been systematically deployed to the field in the immediate aftermath of acute crises in order to address the most pressing food security coordination needs. The first objective under this Result will consist of strengthening the capacity of gFSC to timely deploy competent staff, either from the global Support Team, the gFSC roster, stand-by partners, cluster lead agencies or global partners through more predictable funding and pre-agreed releasing arrangements. In 2014, 58 deployments to respond to crises were carried out in total, with an average duration of 52 days per mission.

Objective 2: Rosters are developed and maintained

During 2014, cluster coordinators and IM officers were often drawn from the gFSC roster. Maintaining a dynamic roster of experts is a key cluster function. Under the gFSC Strategy 2015-16, the roster will be further developed, enriched and cross-referenced with WFP and FAO rosters. In addition, the development of a more rigorous selection process, a systematic performance appraisal following deployments and close linkages with the trainings will contribute to improving the quality of the roster.

Result 4 - Scaled-up advocacy, communication and resource mobilisation

While the benefit of coordination is recognized, it is still necessary to advocate on behalf of gFSC to a wider audience – from traditional and non-traditional donors to the private sector and the general public. Advocacy efforts will be effective in further highlighting gFSC core values and principles of partnership.

Objective 1: gFSC advocacy and communication strategy is developed and implemented

Advocacy has been and will remain an important objective of gFSC in 2015-16. gFSC will assist national clusters in advocating for (i) the value of coordination and the role of clusters (target audience: national authorities and NGO partners) and (ii) the importance of food security, including livelihoods and resilience support in the humanitarian agenda (target audience: Humanitarian Country Teams and donors). gFSC will also continue advocating for the role of food security within the humanitarian policy dialogue (target audience: IASC).
Communication is also an important function of gFSC. Through discussions with partners, gFSC acknowledges that more should be done in order to (i) satisfy the high demand for strengthening communication linkages between country clusters and (ii) present countries’ and global achievements to partners, including donors. Communication products and mechanisms will include FSC website, social media, newsletter, global dashboard, monthly teleconferences, annual report, brochures, web stories and regular e-mail correspondences.

**Objective 2: Resource mobilisation strategy is developed and implemented**

For the period 2015-16, the budget required to implement the strategic plan is approximately US$4,000,000 per year. Since 2011, WFP and FAO, as Co-Lead Agencies, have regularly increased their financial contribution to gFSC from their own resources in line with their commitment to donors (reducing external funding dependence and increasing mainstreaming from Lead Agencies’ budget). Furthermore, in-kind (human resource) contribution from global partners and staffing through the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme of WFP have significantly contributed to boosting the implementation of the gFSC Strategic Plan. Based on the assumption that Co-Lead Agencies will maintain funding mainstreaming and that arrangements with partners (secondments/JPO programme) will be maintained, the annual funding gap to implement the Strategic Plan 2015-16 is around US$1,900,000 to be covered from extra-budgetary resources.

Over the past four years, gFSC’s extra-budgetary resources have been fragmented and often unpredictable, leaving gFSC with a great level of uncertainty and difficulties to plan activities appropriately. The resource mobilisation objective will consist of analysing annual requirements and gaps and engaging with the Co-Lead Agencies and donors in a more systematic and planned manner so that funding predictability is improved.

**Result 5 - Deepened and diversified global partnerships and operational collaborations**

Partnerships and collaboration are at the very heart of the cluster approach. The fundamental reason for the cluster existence is based on the understanding that “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. Result 5 is looking at opportunities and modalities to strengthen country-level and global partnerships.

**Objective 1: gFSC views on humanitarian guidance and policies are acknowledged at Global Cluster Coordinators’ Group and IASC levels**

gFSC will maintain its partnership with other global clusters mainly by participating in the Global Cluster Coordinators’ Group (GCCG), which has the potential to contribute positively to coordination-related decision making, in support of country-level operations.

GCCG terms of reference approved in 2014 highlight the following main areas of collaboration: (i) joint field support to cluster and inter-cluster coordination, tailored to the specific country situation; (ii) cooperation between all or a group of clusters at the global level in order to contribute to a more efficient use of resources and a better response at country-level; (iii) participation in and/or informing global level decision making and raising issues requiring resolution relating to cluster and inter-cluster coordination with relevant bodies as needed; (iv) upon request, engaging in joint advocacy on issues which require amplification at the global level; and (v) contributing to the development and dissemination of guidance and tools for country-level clusters as required.
Objective 2: The existing collaboration with IPC global support team is further enhanced

gFSC will keep taking part in the IPC steering committee as well as in the technical nutrition working group. gFSC will also ensure that the Support Team is trained on IPC basic functions and analysis. Furthermore, the role of IPC in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) will need to be reaffirmed in countries where IPC exists. In other words, IPC is and should remain the instrument that informs the food security component of HPC. Consequently, closer linkages and synergies at country level between the Food Security Cluster and IPC, will be encouraged. In countries where there is no IPC, gFSC will encourage country clusters to form a food security analysis working group that will provide informed, technically sound and coordinated food security evidence and increase awareness on the contributions IPC analysis can offer to FSC activities.

Objective 3: Inter-cluster initiative (WASH, Health, Nutrition and Food Security Clusters)

In 2014, the global Food Security, WASH, Health and Nutrition Clusters started defining possible interactions on both needs analysis and response framework. In the coming two years, gFSC will further explore collaborative options with the objective to roll-out the initiative in some countries. This should result in Strategic Response Plans (SRPs) being more inclusive of the complementarity between clusters. Other inter-cluster collaboration initiatives at country and global level will be encourages, such for assessments, trainings, tools and guidance etc.

Objective 4: Rome-based clusters’ consultation is systematised

Out of the eleven global Clusters, three are based in Rome and are led or co-led by WFP. Under Result 5, collaboration between the three clusters and joint strategic positioning will be discussed. Furthermore, a focal point for the three clusters will be posted in Geneva and will contribute to representing the Rome-based clusters at meetings and fora relevant for food security and humanitarian coordination and response.

Objective 5: Global partners are further engaged to play an active role in gFSC

Some 48 different entities are currently associated to gFSC as partners or observers. They are NGOs, UN agencies, donors, consortia or other institutions such as IFRC or ICRC. These partners are informed and invited to play an active role in the activities and strategic orientation of the gFSC through partners’ meetings, teleconferences or one-to-one exchanges. In 2015-16, partners will be further encouraged to play an even more active role in gFSC. Additional modalities to exchange information and take decisions will be investigated as well. Regular consultations will be conducted on gFSC governance issues.

Objective 6: Strategic engagement of global partners with gFSC is re-defined

Over the past few years gFSC was successful in formalising partnerships with a limited number of institutions either through stand-by partnership agreements or secondments. An important objective for 2015-16 will be to maintain and broaden the base of partners in order to further strengthen the capacity of gFSC on issues related to surge support, preparedness and quality programming in particular.
Regarding learning and knowledge management, the FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action (2009-2014), concluded that “Food security coordination mechanisms, especially those supported by dedicated information management officers, have clearly improved reporting, satisfying some of the demands for greater accountability expressed by donors and promoted through the Transformative Agenda. They have, however, not lived up to their potential for promoting learning.”

Result 6 aims to capture, analyse and document the myriad of best practices in food security-related interventions that are being implemented at country-level with the objective of cross fertilising experiences and opening up new and innovative options to a number of countries. Even more importantly than for other Results, global partners will play a central role in the implementation of the learning and knowledge management component of the strategy.

**Objective 1: Cross fertilisation between countries on strategic topics is facilitated by gFSC through thematic working groups**

Working groups form an important component of the gFSC work. They help to frame ideas, define common standards and design products that should ultimately benefit country-level clusters. Four working groups have been formed by now, namely (i) Inter-Cluster Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition (gFSC and GNC collaboration), (ii) Food Security and Livelihoods in Urban Settings Working Group, (iii) Programme Quality Working Group and (iv) Cash and Markets Working Group.

Under the new Strategic Plan, the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group will keep developing modus-operandi for integrated approach of food security and nutrition. The modality of the collaboration (through a formal working group or a different mechanism) will be re-assessed and perfected. The Urban Livelihoods Working Group will continue conducting case studies and developing/refining urban vulnerability profiling. The Programme Quality Working Group will cover assessments and response analysis; monitoring; and people-centric and cross-cutting issues, including gender, protection, age, disability, environmental issues and Accountability to Affected Populations. In addition to maintaining and reinforcing the Programme Quality and Urban Livelihoods Working Groups, the future of the Cash and Markets platform will be further discussed with other clusters given the increasing use of the cash transfer modality across different sectors in the humanitarian environment.

New working groups could be formed during the 2-year Strategic Plan period based partner interest. In particular, global partners expressed an interest in new technologies and the topic will be further investigated under this Strategic Plan.

**Objective 2: Country clusters are exposed to good practices and lessons learned from other countries**

Reviewing good practices will be more systematically pursued in all countries. Regular Cluster Coordinator Retreats will be introduced as part of this objective.

**Objective 3: FSC field experiences contribute to the preparatory thematic discussions for the Global Humanitarian Summit**

gFSC intends to contribute to the World Humanitarian Summit on its main themes of humanitarian effectiveness, reducing vulnerability and managing risk, transformation through innovation and serving the needs of people in conflict. It will support the preparatory consultations by sharing experiences on partnerships and coordination as well as good practices.
The gFSC Strategic Plan has an implementation period of two years. gFSC has established a budget per Result Area for the first year (2015), amounting to **US$4,091,200**, inclusive of staffing (WFP/FAO recruited staff and NGO seconded staff to the cluster), as well as all activities.

Based on Co-Lead Agencies’ direct contributions and the carry over budget from 2014 grants, the 2015 budget gap for the implementation of the Strategic Plan is **US$1,923,300**. This is mainly to cover activities and specific expertise as gFSC core staff is mainstreamed by FAO and WFP. The budget breakdown is provided in the below table.

Since becoming operational in April 2011, gFSC has been funded by the following organizations (through financial resources or in kind): Australian Aid, Care, European Commission, Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap), HelpAge International, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protection Standby Capacity Project, Samaritan’s Purse, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and World Vision.

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<th>Objective</th>
<th>Budget 2015 (USD)</th>
<th>Available in January 2015 (USD)</th>
<th>Funding gap in January 2015 (USD)</th>
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<td>Result 2. Harmonised and globalised information management system</td>
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<td>Result 4. Scaled-up advocacy, communications and resource mobilization</td>
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<td>Result 5. Deepened and diversified global partnerships and operational collaborations (including with other clusters and IASC)</td>
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<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL gFSC cost (all 6 Results)</strong></td>
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