# COORDINATION IN AREA-BASED SITE MANAGEMENT

## Guidance Note

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Front Cover Caption: Al Hussein site in Lahj, one of the catchment areas prioritized for the pilot of Area-Based Site Management activities in Yemen by the CCCM Cluster.

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# CONTENT

# INTRODUCTION

Area-Based Site Management (ABSM) provides a comprehensive framework for the implementation of Site Management through an area-based approach. ABSM is used to address challenges of operating in informal sites in both rural and urban areas as well as in dispersed, out of camp displacement contexts. In practice, through ABSM, the geographical area targeted by Site Management programming, often referred to as the catchment area, has a high density of displaced people living communally and is broader than a single displacement site. ABSM covers all components of site management such as community participation - including community committee structures, information provision, complaint, feedback and referral mechanisms, community infrastructure improvements or maintenance, capacity building, information management and coordination.

CCCM actors recognized the growing need for an out of camp approach in 2011 at the Global CCCM Retreat, publishing the Urban Displacement Out of Camp (UDOC) desk review in 2014 as a first step to understanding and responding to these contexts[1]. In 2021, the Global Cluster published the Area Based Approaches in Site Management position paper[2]. Both documents recognized the increased complexity of displacement trends that have become more urban and protracted in nature. While most displaced populations have access to a wider range of settlement options outside of formal collective displacement sites, this has not necessarily translated to increased access to assistance and protection.
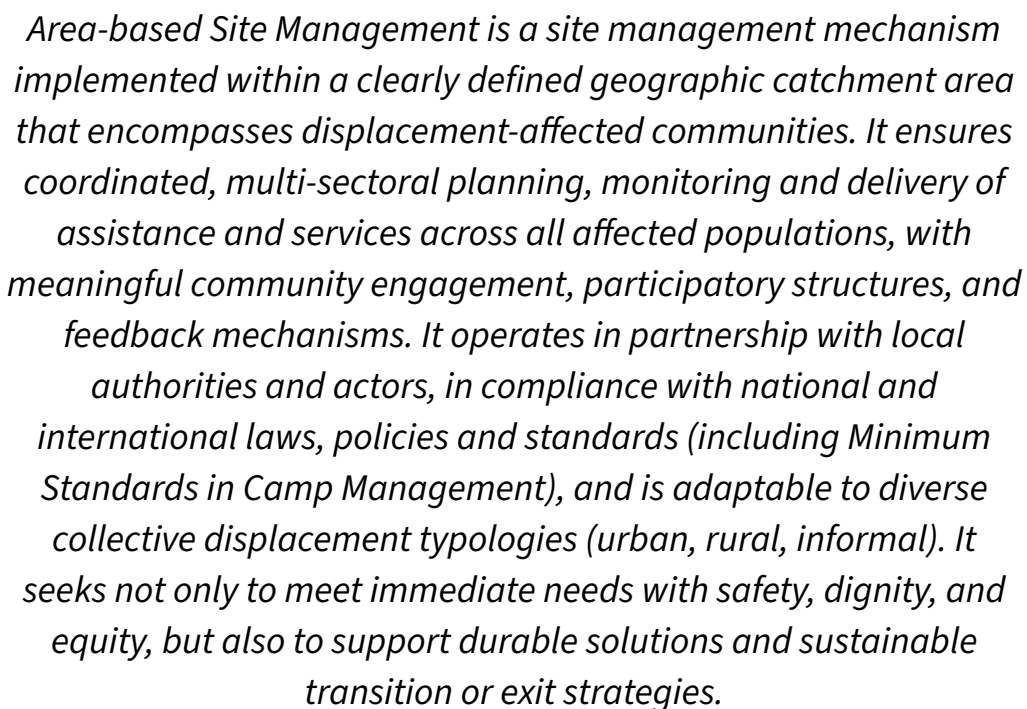


For more information on the Area-Based Site Management Framework, check out the video explainer showing how adapting site management activities through area-based approaches can address the needs of displacement affected communities, helping them accessing information, protection, and services, and guaranteeing that they are involved in decisions that affect them. The video is also available in French, Spanish, and Arabic.

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[1] CCCM Cluster, 2024, Urban Displacement Out of Camp Desk Review.

[2] CCCM Cluster, 2021, Position Paper on Area Based Approaches.

The Area-Based Site Management framework was conceptualized through Site Management practice over the years as a mechanism to developed context-specific operational responses that address the needs of displaced persons that live with limited or no access to assistance and protection alongside marginalized and vulnerable host population groups. While other multisectoral humanitarian coordination mechanisms (led by the local authorities or by mandated international organizations) exist outside of a single displacement site, they normally target a geographic area that is too broad to ensure meaningful and inclusive representation of those most affected by the crisis. Site Management Agencies have been able to focus their skill set to operate within smaller perimeters to support displaced people and displacement affected host communities by improving their access to information, protection, services and representation. These activities bring information management and humanitarian coordination closer to those affected by the crisis, as when mandated to operate in a formal site response. In this sense, ABSM enriches existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms (such as sub national cluster, inter cluster coordination, or ABC forums) by ensuring there is a two-way communication between these fora and the displacement affected communities living in their targeted catchment areas.

This guidance note focuses on how the coordination component of ABSM operates in practice. The note demonstrates how coordination in ABSM can be operationalized, how Site Management actors understand their roles and responsibilities, and how these fit into the broader humanitarian architecture.

*Area-based Site Management is a site management mechanism implemented within a clearly defined geographic catchment area that encompasses displacement-affected communities. It ensures coordinated, multi-sectoral planning, monitoring and delivery of assistance and services across all affected populations, with meaningful community engagement, participatory structures, and feedback mechanisms. It operates in partnership with local authorities and actors, in compliance with national and international laws, policies and standards (including Minimum Standards in Camp Management), and is adaptable to diverse collective displacement typologies (urban, rural, informal). It seeks not only to meet immediate needs with safety, dignity, and equity, but also to support durable solutions and sustainable transition or exit strategies.*

Area-based Site Management aligns with area-based approaches characteristics as such:

- **Geographically targeted**: ABSM targets an area that is bigger than a single site, often referred to as the catchment area, similarly to how in classic site management responses, the site management agency targets a site that can be considered akin to a specific geographic area.

- **Participatory**: ABSM actively involve multiple stakeholders through setting up and supporting coordination fora and community engagement mechanisms.

- **Multisectoral:** being site management about the coordination and monitoring of service provision, protection and assistance.

The Global CCCM Cluster has explicitly incorporated area-based approaches and responses into its Global Cluster Strategy (2025-2029)[3], and ABSM is also incorporated into several national CCCM Cluster Strategies.

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[3] Available on the CCCM Global Cluster website.

# COORDINATION STRUCTURE, MECHANISMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Coordination in Site Management is defined as the process of sharing information and planning together in pursuit of mutual and agreed upon goals[4]. Through coordination, the Site Management agencies applying the ABSM framework ensure that duplication is avoided, participation is enhanced, information is shared, humanitarian standards are applied, and human rights are protected.

Within the traditional Site Management response, coordination happens at two levels:

**(1)** Intra-camp: coordination within camps to ensure coordinated and appropriate service delivery within the camp. Coordination within a site is traditionally a key responsibility of the Site Management Agency, who works closely with Site Administration, the function performed by the local authorities.

**(2)** Inter-camp: coordination between camps to ensure consistency in standards of services and approaches to coordination and management at camp-level. Key responsibility of Cluster Coordinator, or site coordination, which conducts this function at subnational or national level as relevant.

In the ABSM Framework, Site Management agencies replicate this model, as coordination also happens at two levels:

**(1)** Intra-area (within the area): coordination within the catchment area to ensure coordinated and appropriate service delivery for displacement affected population. Within the area, the Site management agency adapts its responsibilities and utilizes its skills to coordinate with all the relevant actors in the area, including authorities, service providers and displacement affected communities.

**(2)** Inter-area (between the areas): coordination between catchment areas to ensure consistency in standards of services and approaches to coordination and management at a given admin level. This function remains a key responsibility of a Cluster Coordinator who conducts this function at subnational or national level as relevant, or of mandated area-based coordination mechanisms.

Traditionally, one of the major differences between the coordination in a classic Site Management response and in ABSM is the level of engagement of the local authorities. In an ABSM response where activities target a catchment area that is broader than a single site, local authorities are the primarily responder for coordination within the targeted (catchment) area and SM actors are present to support and work closely with the local authorities (intra area-coordination). In practice the distinction between coordination in classic Site Management

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[4]
  As per the Camp Management Toolkit chapter 4 and the Minimum Standard for Camp Management.

has become less clear cut in recent years. It has become increasingly common in classic Site Management responses to adopt a Site Management Support modality[5]. This keeps the function of Site Management as a responsibility of local authorities or local organizations with international organizations often intervening by providing support to strengthen the capacities of the appointed actor so they can deliver on their Site Management roles and responsibilities. Considering this experience and expertise, Site Management agencies have been able to support coordination in ABSM responses by supporting and empowering local actors, rather than taking over their responsibilities, fully in line with the spirit of area-based approaches.



Members of the Women`s group at Community Center, managed by OSSHD, are discussing plans to sell woven baskets at the Axum Bazaar . The community hub serves displacement affected communities in Axum, Ethiopia, providing a space for coordination, participation and information sharing.

In an ABSM response, the Site Management agency coordinates and exchanges information with a broader range of stakeholders such as different offices of the local authorities, private service providers and development actors. Host communities and host community representatives will also play a more prominent role in coordination at the catchment area level. The role of the Site Management team will be to convene and connect various stakeholders, including community members (both displaced and host communities), and to strengthen/establish communication and coordination mechanism(s), including taking proactive initiative in capacity building and shadowing.

It is essential to highlight that Coordination within a catchment area in ABSM must be embedded and strongly connected with both the sub-national and national humanitarian coordination structures through the Cluster (coordination between areas) at sub national and national level and/or through Area-Based Coordination  mechanisms where existing. Information  sharing between these different coordination levels goes two ways: from the catchment area where the area-based site management operates to the national level and the other way around, passing through Sub National Cluster Coordinators and/or mandated Area-Based Coordination Mechanisms where existing. The ABSM agency shares information on challenges, trends and operational insights to the sub-national cluster Coordinator or mandated area-based coordinators, including reporting gaps and needs for assistance for further advocacy, resource mobilization and coordination support at the higher admin level.

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[5]
As per  the <u>Minimum Standards for Camp  Management.</u>

Through ABSM, the site management agency can also ensure that the views of affected population can be shared with the Cluster representative at sub national and/or with Area-Based Coordination, thus ensuring the presence of an effective mechanism to enhance accountability toward affected population at sub-national level. On the other hand, information is normally channeled to the ABSM agency from the national Cluster Coordinator via the sub-national CCCM Cluster Coordinator, or where relevant, by the Are-Based Coordination Mechanism; this ensures that the ABSM agency receive technical support implementation and relevant information for adequate activities planning.

Although coordination activities in ABSM will vary depending to the displacement context and from existing coordination mechanisms and gaps, we can categorize coordination activities in ABSM into five macro categories:

• Establishing or strengthening coordination systems within the area: helping to identify and bring together multiple stakeholders to ensure inclusive coordination at a localized level – building on existing platforms (where they exist) or establishing new ones (if needed), referring cases for assistance and gaps to competent service providers.

• Supporting and reporting to coordination systems between areas: report and share information with competent fora mandated to coordinate between areas and site management partners, such as the CCCM sub national clusters or sub national inter cluster coordination or equivalent ABC mechanism.

• Information Management to support coordination: including conducting assessment and mapping of areas, needs, and gaps, mapping services and actors providing services in the area, effective information sharing among partners, helping to set up information management mechanisms to allow standardized data collection and reporting within the area and between the areas.

• Promoting the engagement of affected communities in coordination: establishing structures and building the capacity of community members in coordination, create links and channels of communication between affected communities and service providers, disseminate relevant information on services available in the area and operate a complaint and feedback management system.

• Capacity Building: for authorities and other stakeholders in the practice of coordination, community engagement and participation, information management.

# OPERATIONALIZATION: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alongside these key considerations, three factors for successful coordination remain the same in either ABSM or classic Site Management and should also be considered:

## Mandates

In a coordination forum, the stakeholders involved in coordination must work towards clearly defined and agreed upon outcomes, based on their respective and complementary mandates and under the leadership of the actor chairing the coordination forum.

All SM mandated actors must fully understand their roles and responsibilities in coordination within their area but also the reporting lines to the agencies or actors responsible for inter-area coordination. Similarly, stakeholders in ABSM coordination should fully understand the role and mandate of the Site Management agency and respect the principle of partnership: equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.

The support of the cluster, responsible for inter-area coordination, is essential to in clarifying the mandate of the ABSM agency: the cluster would normally be the overall response authority appointing a site management agency to carry out ABSM activities [6] and should also be responsible to sensitize other actors on the added value of ABSM, and advocating the recognition and respect of this mandate at both local and national level as needed.

To support its mandate, it is also important that the Site Management agency has humanitarian policies and strategies in place to support the coordination system, as well as leadership and organizational structures that guide and encourage Site Management teams to work in principled ways and demonstrate accountability in its activities towards displacement affected persons and communities, as well as towards all other stakeholders in the response, including service providers, the authorities and other coordination fora.

## Systems and Good Practices

It is essential that all the actors taking part in the coordination forum remain accountable. For this reason, appropriate and documented governance and accountability frameworks need to be in place. Clarity of roles and responsibilities should be established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Terms of Reference, clearly outlining the systems at the local level and connections to the sub-national and national levels. These documents should also consider formalizing reporting lines and responsibilities to ensure that the Site Management agency can efficiently carry out information management activities such as partners mapping and service monitoring. Specific procedures should also be in place for referrals, including for complaints received by the Site Management agency, and should be formalized in dedicated documents such as Standard Operating Procedures.

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[6] In line with  Standard 1.1 of <u>the Minimum Standard for Camp Management</u>.

Such documents should be prepared through consultations and information sessions be provided widely to members of the coordination forum. Sufficient and appropriate resources need to be available to deliver on coordination responsibilities. Effective indicators to measure the progress and success of the activity from an established baseline must be agreed, with a clear procedure for remedial action being taken when necessary.

As mentioned, recognizing and working closely with local authorities as well as formal and informal community governance structures is critical to the success of coordination in an ABSM response. While there are many ways to do this, consider recognizing their leadership in the coordination framework, building capacity with trainings, advocating for additional resources to support their work and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes.

# Interpersonal Communication Skills

The outcome of coordination based on policy, perspectives, objectives and principles will be limited unless all stakeholders have a proactive and inclusive attitude towards each other and the coordination process. Site Managers need the right skills and competencies to work collaboratively: this includes communication and listening skills, cultural sensitivity, trust and ability to establish consensus are important, as is commitment to coordinate and to actively participate in the coordination forum[7]. Site Management practitioners recognize the importance of interpersonal communication skills for effective communication and the CCCM global training package has a dedicate module on this topic.

Above all it is important to acknowledge that coordination does not only mean meetings, although they can be a useful venue for decision-making. Decision-makers should attend meetings so that problems are addressed and resolved quickly. Separate level meetings are time-consuming, and the aim of coordination is not to delay decision-making or make assistance ineffective. It is not necessary to duplicate coordination structures at all levels. For sensitive issues, other forms of coordination may be useful and appropriate, such as bilateral meetings with partners. It is critical to be aware of which issues should be handled with discretion.

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[7] CCCM Global Training package Module 8, 'Coordination and Monitoring of services'.
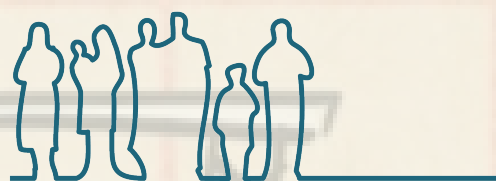
# OPERATIONALIZATION: FIELD EXAMPLES

Here is a set of examples of tools and resources that site management practitioners have developed and used to operationalize coordination in ABSM:

- CCCM Cluster Yemen: <u>Area-based Coordination ToR Yemen</u> and Area-Based Coordination Guidance note Yemen.

- CCCM Cluster Iraq: <u>ToR for Community Resource Centre</u> , included in the CCCCM Cluster Coordinator toolkit.

- CCCM Cluster Ukraine: <u>West-Centre Hub CCCM Area-Based Approach ToR</u>.

- From the <u>Community Coordination Toolbox</u>:

  1. <u>How to use the Community Coordination Tools in an Area-Based Approach</u>
  2. <u>Safe and dignified referrals</u>
  3. <u>Stakeholder Mapping</u>
  4. <u>Service Mapping</u>
  5. <u>Community Centre Key Steps and Tools</u>
  6. <u>Community Resource Center MoU and Guidance to design a community center SoP</u>

# KEY GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

- CCCM Cluster paper on Area based approaches

- CCCM Cluster paper on Mobile CCCM

- Minimum Standards for Camp Management

- Area-Based Site Management Explainer video

- Global CCCM Training, Module 8, Coordination and Monitoring of services Session Plan and Reference Folder

- Area-Based Site Management Training, Module 9, Coordination in Area-Based Site Management

- Camp Management Toolkit Chapter 4, Coordination

- Case studies on Area-Based Site Management and additional resources are listed in the ABA Resource Matrix

- Global Cluster Area-Based Approaches Working Group Webpage

- Settlements Approach guidance note by the Settlement Approaches in Urban Area Working Group (Global Shelter Cluster)

- Connecting the dots between Settlement Approach/ Area Based Approach and Area Based Coordination by the Settlement Approaches in Urban Area Working Group (Global Shelter Cluster)