



The Shelter Cluster wants to enable displaced people to return to their homes as quickly as possible. In some cases, the Cluster assists with cash or vouchers to help with rent or building materials. © S. Phelps/UNHCR; Pakistan 2011

- ▶ **Working Groups:** task-oriented and time-bound structures with clear executable deliverables that are established by the SAG to address particular identified needs.
- ▶ **Communities of Practice:** thematic groups of expert individuals that provide technical support to the global or country level clusters, develop good practice, and address critical issues within their areas of expertise.
- ▶ **Support Team:** a team of dedicated personnel seconded by different cluster partners. This team is the support cell or secretariat of the GSC and is responsible for its day to day management. The team provides technical and surge support to country level clusters and facilitates the work of the SAG, working groups, and communities of practice. It also provides inputs to inter-agency discussions and inter-cluster coordination at the global level, and contributes to building capacity and enhancing preparedness.

## The Global Shelter Cluster, the Humanitarian Reform and the Transformative Agenda

The Cluster Approach is a component of the Humanitarian Reform that followed the Humanitarian Response Review in 2005. In light of the growing recognition of weaknesses in the multilateral humanitarian response system and building on lessons learned, the IASC Principals decided to make adjustments to improve the system further. The resulting IASC Transformative Agenda process, initiated in 2011, called on all clusters to improve coordination, leadership and accountability. In response to these recommendations, the GSC has strengthened its capacity to provide and support humanitarian shelter coordination at global, regional and country level.



Shelter Cluster partners work with affected communities to ensure that shelter solutions are culturally appropriate. © M. Baars/IOM; Luak - Unity State South Sudan 2013

### Contact:

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# The Global Shelter Cluster Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



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**The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)<sup>1</sup> coordination mechanism that supports people affected by natural disasters and internally displaced people in conflicts with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter. The GSC enables better coordination among all shelter actors, including local and national governments, so that the people who need shelter assistance get help faster and receive the right kind of support.**

## Scope of the Global Shelter Cluster

People who have lost their homes try to meet their shelter needs as quickly as possible. Disaster and conflict-affected households use different types of material, technical, financial and social assistance to ensure access to appropriate shelter. This “sheltering” process goes beyond the immediate provision of basic shelter solutions and is closely linked to longer-term recovery and reconstruction, as well as with other measures to assist individuals, families and communities to re-establish themselves and resume an ordinary life.

The GSC's scope includes all activities related to achieving the right to adequate housing with a humanitarian focus.

This includes:

- ▶ emergency and longer term shelter support
- ▶ shelter-related non-food-items (NFIs)
- ▶ housing construction and reconstruction
- ▶ settlement support such as site planning and urban planning
- ▶ shelter preparedness and risk reduction.

## Global and local coordination support

To support the shelter preparedness, relief and recovery process, the Cluster operates on two levels:

- ▶ At the *global level*, the GSC strengthens system-wide preparedness and increases technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies through improved coordination, and support for country-level shelter clusters.

<sup>1</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, the IFRC, the ICRC, IOM, and the main international NGO consortia.

- ▶ At the *country level*, Shelter Coordination Teams ensure a predictable, effective response by mobilizing groups of agencies, non-government organizations, local and national governments, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to respond in a strategic and accountable manner.

## The Cluster Approach

As part of the Humanitarian Reform Process, the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed in 2005 to designate global cluster lead organizations as coordinators for all the main sectors of humanitarian response. Organizations that have accepted this responsibility include UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Save the Children.

The Cluster Approach aims to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, and coordination of humanitarian response, following natural disasters or for internally displaced people in emergencies caused by conflict. It seeks to ensure that the humanitarian community becomes more structured, accountable and professional, and can better partner with local authorities and other humanitarian actors. The Cluster Approach is not used in refugee situations, since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to coordinate assistance for refugees.

The Shelter Cluster is one of eleven sectoral clusters. For more information please see [www.humanitarianresponse.info](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info)

## Shelter is more than tents

The various needs of affected households for safety, privacy, protection and livelihood activities must be addressed through approaches that are appropriate to the specific context and the availability of resources. Rather than simply providing pre-determined shelter products or stand-alone solutions such as tents or pre-fabricated shelters, humanitarian actors use a variety of methods to provide support to the affected people. These include the provision of basic shelter materials, technical support, cash-based assistance, awareness-raising and promotion of safe shelter and settlement practices, rental support, or a combination of these and other approaches. Some of these methods involve construction, but many others do not. The GSC supports these different approaches, which build upon and support local solutions.

- ▶ *The Global Shelter Cluster* collects, analyses, discusses and shares best practice and lessons learned worldwide, to ensure that men, women and children affected by conflicts and natural disasters get the best possible assistance.
- ▶ *The Global Shelter Cluster* recognizes and supports the contributions made by national shelter stakeholders, such as governmental authorities, local organizations and the affected households themselves, to achieve durable shelter and settlement solutions.
- ▶ *The Global Shelter Cluster* acknowledges the need to ensure a comprehensive and integrated response and the essential role of shelter to support protection and early recovery. Thus, the Global Shelter Cluster works closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other global clusters to ensure inter-cluster coordination, in particular with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Education, Early Recovery, and Protection.



Plastic tarpaulins and tents are frequently the first kind of emergency shelter assistance the Cluster coordinates. © Truls Brekke/NRC; Democratic Republic of the Congo 2008

## The Global Shelter Cluster's Management Structure

The *GSC partners* meet twice a year to review progress against agreed objectives and define the GSC strategic direction and annual priorities. In order to effectively meet their global responsibilities, the GSC partners have agreed to organize and coordinate their activities



Standardized shelter tool kits enable affected people build, repair and improve their shelter. © Jakob Dall/IFRC; Haiti 2010

through a management approach that allows participation and at the same time streamlines decision making. The GSC management structure has been informed by the experience of country-level shelter clusters since 2006 and the Transformative Agenda.

The structure is as follows:

- ▶ *Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)*: a permanent body that works to advance the Cluster's strategic direction and overall work plan. The SAG is elected by and composed of agencies and institutions that are part of the GSC.



- ▶ *Global Cluster Lead Agencies*: The GSC is co-chaired by UNHCR and the IFRC. The IFRC convenes the Shelter Cluster in natural disaster situations, while UNHCR leads the Shelter Cluster in conflict situations. The Global Cluster Lead Agencies are responsible for establishing a broad partnership base to advance the Cluster's aim and objectives. The Lead Agencies call and chair the Global Shelter Cluster Meeting and the SAG. They coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Global Shelter Cluster core functions.

Supporting the coordinated construction of temporary shelters is one of the core tasks of the Shelter Cluster in many emergencies. © Habitat for Humanity International/Ezra Millstein; Haiti 2012