



Francophone Shelter Network

Intention Note on an inter-agency initiative

Version # 2 - June 2024

Humanitarian organizations active in the shelter sector, CRAterre, CRS, IFRC, IOM, UNHCR, and supported by the [Global Shelter Cluster](#), are pooling their efforts under this inter-agency initiative to establish the **Francophone Shelter Network**.

The objective of this network is to enhance the capacity of the shelter sector to plan and deliver humanitarian and reconstruction programs in Francophone countries, through knowledge-sharing, cooperative actions, and research.

Why is shelter assistance crucial ?

Losing one's home is devastating. And shelter assistance is the foundation of humanitarian response. It is critically important as it provides immediate protection following a crisis, particularly safeguarding the health, security and dignity of those affected.

Shelter - and its environment, also plays a vital role in restoring the psychological, social and physical components of life, as well as in rebuilding livelihoods. Shelter assistance is foundational for resuming activities and long-term reconstruction of family and community life.

Climate change, growing inequalities, escalating conflicts and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters are creating more complex and prolonged crises, leading to a constant rise in displaced populations. In 2023, more than 110 million people worldwide were forced to leave their homes, displaced within or outside their countries¹, with 92 million requiring shelter assistance².

In this context, all shelter sector stakeholders, guided by humanitarian principles and the right to decent housing, have collectively provided shelter assistance to over 20 million people with funding of 1.3 billion USD, which is vastly insufficient to meet all needs.

Scope of shelter assistance needs in the Francophone countries

Not all crises are funded equally. Indeed, too many humanitarian crises receive little global attention. This is particularly true for crises affecting the Francophone world³, especially Francophone Africa, which year after year produces relentless statistics: seven of the ten lowest-ranked countries in the world in terms of Human Development Index are part of it⁴.

There have never been as many internal displacements within Francophone countries as there are today, with more than 11 million internally displaced people estimated at the end of 2023 due to armed conflicts, intercommunal violence and sudden disasters:

- In the **Sahel region** alone, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, more than 4.2 million people are estimated to have fled their homes in 2023⁵.
- In the **Lake Chad Basin**, Cameroon, Chad and Niger host over 3 million internally displaced or refugee persons affected by poverty, violence and recent floods⁶.

¹ [Mid-Year 2023 Trends Report | UNHCR](#)

² [Global Shelter Cluster Achievements Report 2023](#)

³ The Francophone world here refers to all the countries which use French as an official and/or vehicular language, and spread across all continents.

⁴ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

⁵ www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/sahel-crisis/

⁶ [Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot \(as of 18 December 2023\) - Nigeria | ReliefWeb](#)



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Week (HNPW in Geneva) and other relevant events to highlight the challenges of the shelter sector in the Francophone countries and the activities of the network.

-     Based on the online exchange and training workshops and on the format of regional Shelter Forums, **organize in 2025 the first edition of the Francophone Shelter Forum** in French and in-person to bring together shelter practitioners operating in Francophone countries to share knowledge and experiences. As part of the localization agenda, this Forum will encourage the presence and active participation of local organizations.
-   **Identify the academic and professional training courses** for careers in architecture, construction, and the environment that exist in Francophone countries, and understand how these training courses prepare the next generation of builders, particularly in Francophone Africa. Suggest to the institutions offering these training courses that they include topics on emergency shelter and incorporate elements of reflection from the Global Shelter Cluster (such as climate change, promotion of local constructive cultures, urban displacements, transition from emergency to durable solution, etc.).

2 Cooperative actions

-    Formally structure the Francophone Shelter network around a **Community of Practice**¹⁵ to forge strategic and operational links, pool synergies, skills and best practices among French-speaking practitioners to promote the emergence of local initiatives and also to develop advocacy common grounds to address funding gaps, technical shortcomings, and recurrent recruitment challenges of qualified personnel.
-   Provide French-language documents and digital resources in a shared knowledge repository. This **digital platform for knowledge exchange**, hosted by the Global Shelter Cluster, shares field experiences and promising practices, and provides tools for project cycle management.

3 Research

-      **Thoroughly assess the capacities of the Shelter sector** operating in the Francophone countries in terms of strengths, weaknesses, available assets, and learning needs to develop a capacity-building strategy for French-speaking shelter practitioners.
-    **Map existing actors involved in the Shelter sector**, at different levels of skills, interest and influence in Francophone countries to **developing strategic, operational and financial partnerships** (by forging links with scientific and cultural governmental entities, international organizations, local NGOs, technical cooperation agencies, private associations and companies, donors, public development banks, academic milieu, professional training actors, etc.).

¹⁵ <https://sheltercluster.org/community-practice/reseau-habitat-durgence-francophone>



Conclusion. With this intention note, which will be expanded over time both to reflect the positions of a broader range of actors and to formulate more detailed recommendations, we express our commitment to pooling our efforts to federate the multiple actors and competencies within this *Francophone Shelter Network*.

Together, we aim to make funding and delivery of shelter assistance in the Francophone countries more effective and to better prepare for crises, to better prevent disasters, and to sustainably respond to prolonged displacement situations.

As signatories of the *Grand Bargain* committing to a localization agenda, we encourage humanitarian responses that provide increased support for the responsibility and capacities of local and national actors, and the participation of affected communities.

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