



ETHIOPIA
EMERGENCY SHELTER & NFI CLUSTER
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

ETHIOPIA

EMERGENCY SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

CLUSTER STRATEGY (2025-2027)

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ES/NFI	Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items
ES	Emergency Shelter
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HLP	Housing, Land and Properties
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
NFI	Non-Food Items
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Photo: ESNFI Cluster

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Context	3
3. Ethiopia ES/NFI Cluster Strategic Plan 2025–2027	4
i. Strategic Purpose	4
ii. Strategic Vision and Mission	4
4. Cluster Strategic Approach	6
i. Humanitarian Assistance	6
ii. Capacity Building	6
iii. Communication and Advocacy	6
iv. Partnership Coordination	6
5. Theory of Change	7
6. Guiding Principles	8
Accountability	8
Do not Harm	8
Ensure Meaningful Access	8
Localization	8
Evidence-Based Action and Decision Making	9
Coordination for Integrated Programming	9
Expectations Must be Managed	9
Context Driven Responses	9
Targeting	9
Long-term Solutions	9
7. Program Considerations	10
Protection and GBV	10
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, PSEA	10
Gender	10
Environmental Protection	10
People Who Require Special Attention	11
Housing Land and Properties (HLP)	11
Host Communities	11
Participation and Empowerment of Affected People	11
8. Response Options	12
9. Monitoring	13
10. Exit Strategy	13



Introduction

This document outlines the three-year strategic plans of the Ethiopian Emergency Shelter and NFI Cluster (ES/NFI Cluster), which define the collective vision, mission, objectives, and values that will inform the joint action of the Cluster members. The ES/NFI Cluster strives to deliver high-quality, efficient, and accountable Shelter and Non-Food Item (NFI) assistance to the people most in need of humanitarian support due to natural or human-induced disasters. To achieve the goals of the strategy, the Cluster members are required to actively engage with and contribute to the Cluster's implementation plan and monitoring framework.

The ES/NFI Cluster comprises national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and United Nations (UN) agencies that provide humanitarian Shelter and NFI response to the displaced population. The Cluster has been operating in Ethiopia since 2008. The three-year ES/NFI Cluster strategy for Ethiopia covers the period from 2025 to 2027. It acknowledges the diversity and complexity of the contexts across Ethiopia, as well as the specific needs of each location. The strategy has been developed with the participation of the Government and other relevant stakeholders, including other clusters and partners, and aligned with the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC). It also recognizes the need for close coordination and integration of Shelter and NFI assistance with other sectors to address the wider needs of the affected population. The strategy is based on the premise that shelter and NFI interventions should be complementary and harmonized with the efforts of the Government and civil society.

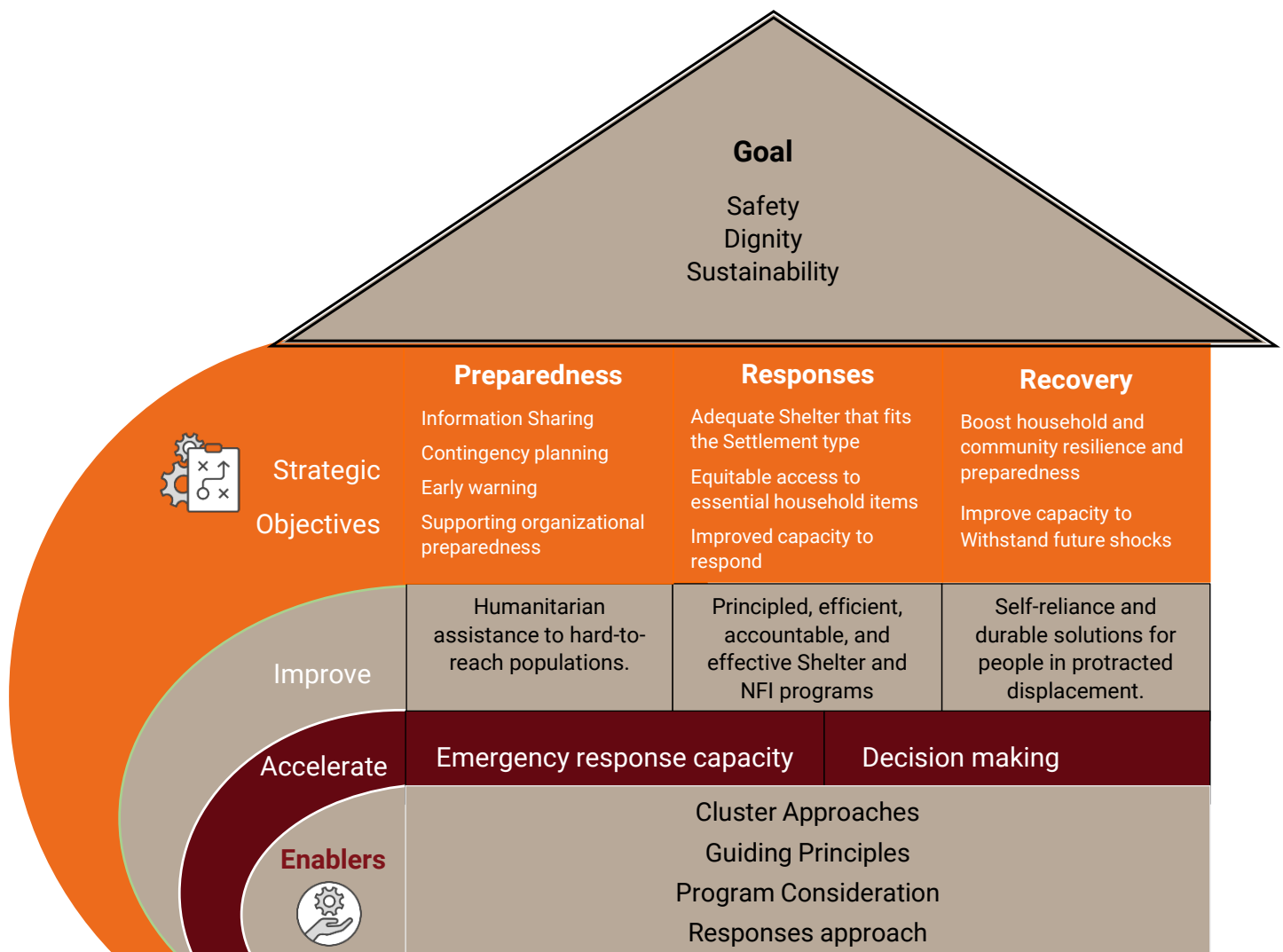




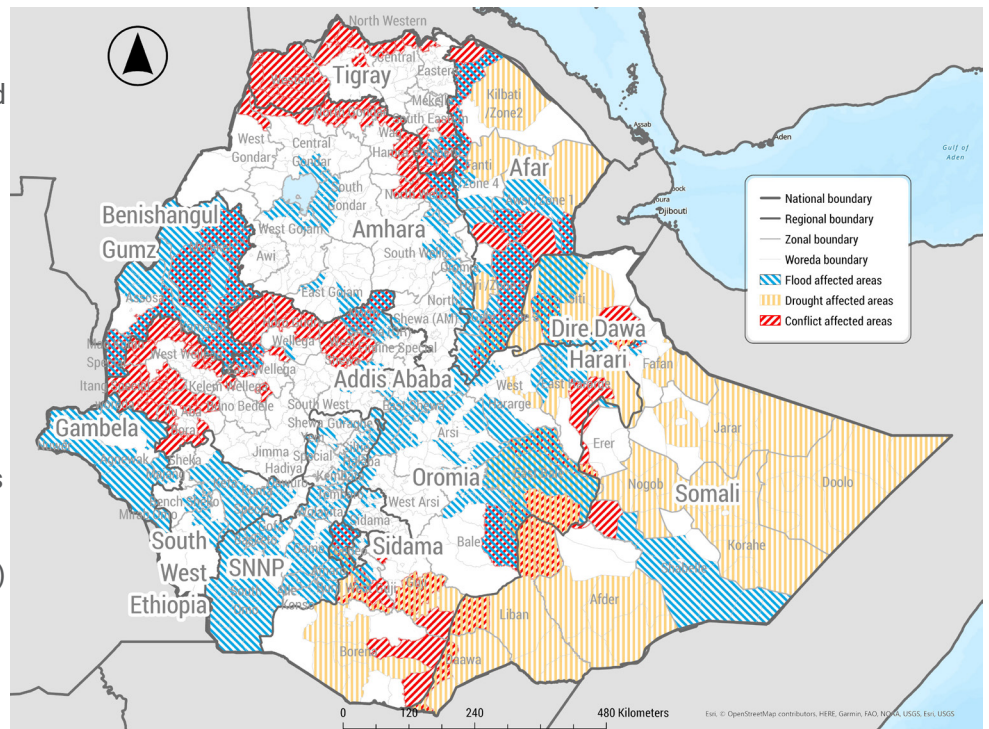
Photo: ESNFI Cluster

Context

Conflicts and climate-related shocks, such as droughts, landslides, and floods, have led to significant humanitarian needs in Ethiopia over the past few years. As of May 2024, an estimated 3.3 million individuals were internally displaced across accessible sites assessed by IOM's DTM Site Assessment (SA). The data indicates that 47% of estimated IDPs arrived in their location of displacement within the last 2 years prior to the assessment, and 53% had arrived 3 or more years prior.

The living conditions in the assessed IDP sites were substandard, with nearly half lacking separate shelters for each household. This deficiency increased the vulnerability of certain groups, particularly women and girls, exposing them to privacy and security concerns. Moreover, 2.6 million individuals returned to their places of origin.

The Shelter and Non-Food Items responses will prioritize assistance based on assessed needs, ensuring that aid is distributed equitably without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, gender, age, or any other factors. The Centrality of Protection is fundamental to all the ES/NFI cluster responses, guiding the approach to preserve all individuals' safety and dignity. A fundamental principle in this approach is the commitment to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and safeguarding vulnerable populations, which are critical concerns throughout the implementation process.



To ensure inclusivity, particular attention will be given to person with disabilities and older people in response modalities and during distributions, guaranteeing their meaningful access to humanitarian aid. This inclusive approach is essential for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of physical ability, can benefit from the support provided.

Moreover, the ES/NFI Cluster acknowledges the importance of considering both short-term and long-term environmental impacts. Rapid resource harvesting for shelter construction can have detrimental effects, such as soil degradation, increased vulnerability to flooding and landslides, and a reduction in community resilience due to the removal of vegetation and trees that stabilize slopes. These environmental considerations are crucial for maintaining the sustainability of both the immediate response and the long-term well-being of affected communities.

In areas experiencing prolonged displacement or where return processes are underway, Shelter and NFI programs must align with durable solutions to foster self-reliance and resilience among the affected populations. By integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies into recovery efforts, the program can help ensure that returns are sustainable and that communities are better equipped to withstand climatic shocks, which are particularly prevalent in Ethiopia. This holistic approach aims to create a foundation for long-term recovery and resilience.

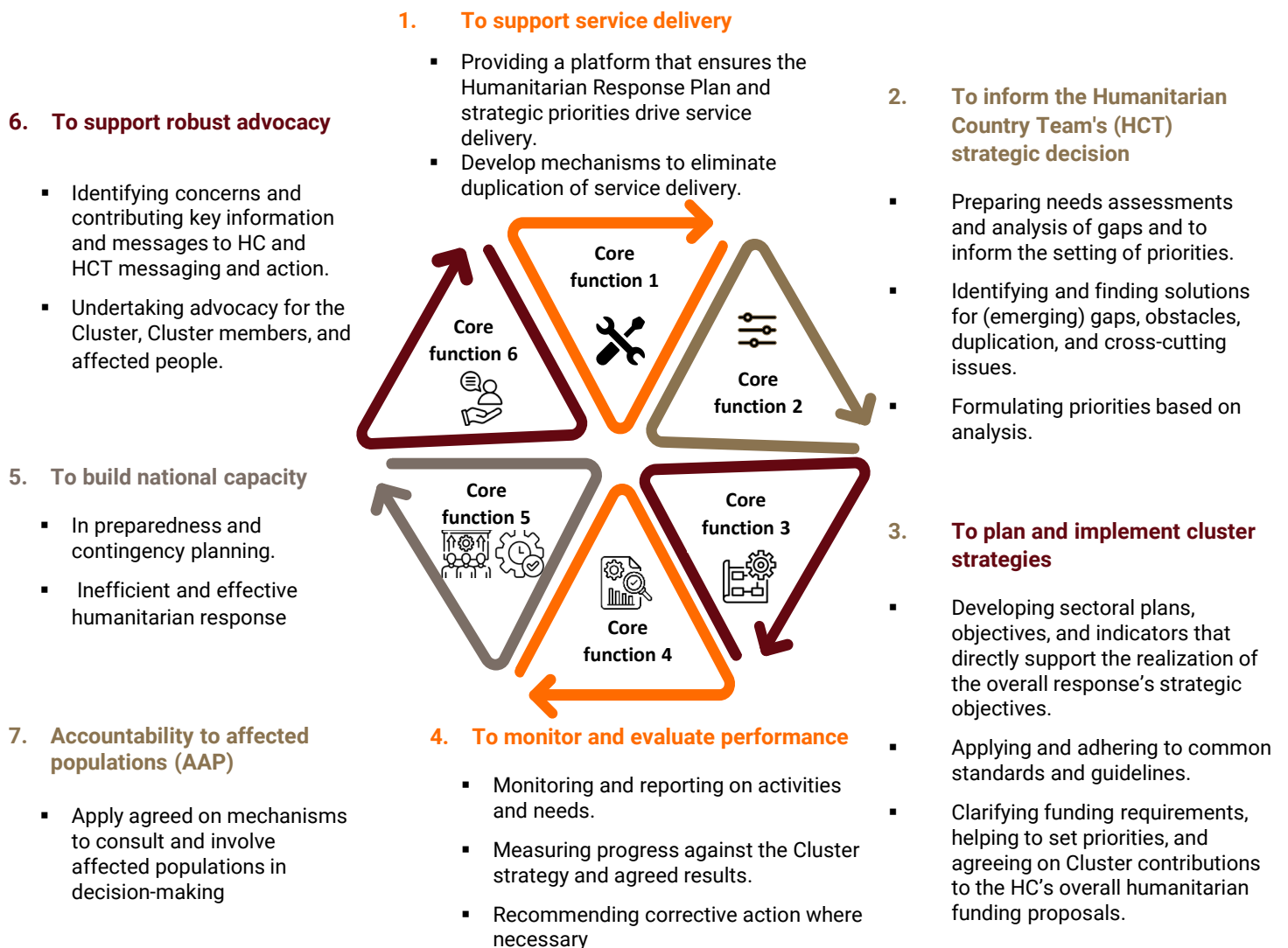
Ethiopia ES/NFI Cluster Strategic Plan 2025–2027

i. Strategic Purpose

The Cluster Strategic Plan outlines the shared vision and objectives that guide the collective commitment to joint action. The strategy also identifies five strategic enablers that describe how we will improve our responses to work effectively and efficiently. The Cluster is reaffirming its focus on excellence in effective and accountable humanitarian ES/NFI coordination for the people most impacted by crises.

ii. Strategic Vision and Mission

Vision: To strengthen effective and accountable Shelter and NFI responses that will be timely, safe, predictable, inclusive, and equitable for crises-affected people.



Based on the cluster partners' areas of focus and the evolving nature of the cluster approach, there is a recognized need to increase focus on a thematic area such as Protection Risk Analysis and Mainstreaming, Disability and Older People Inclusion, Accountability to Affected populations (AAP), Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), GBV, age, environment and climate change, cash and markets and localization.



Photo: ESNFI Cluster

Cluster Strategic Approach

i. Humanitarian Assistance

By ensuring access to adequate Shelter and essential household items, the Cluster improves physical and mental well-being, reduces risks and threats, prevents exploitation, and empowers self-reliance through livelihood activities. The Cluster's responses begin with lifesaving interventions that provide temporary Shelters and essential household items during the emergency phase and continue supporting recovery and durable solutions in protracted displacement situations.

ii. Capacity Building

The Cluster will ensure that staff, partner organizations, local governments, displaced populations, and host community members benefit from the training provided by the Cluster in various thematic areas as direct participants or indirect beneficiaries.

iii. Communication and Advocacy

The Cluster will communicate information and advocate for the rights of the displaced, utilizing various available platforms in the country. Donor community interest in Shelter and NFI is evident, but there is a need to maintain and reinforce this interest. The Cluster will significantly advocate for the most critical needs and communicate the challenges, including key asks.

iv. Partnership Coordination

One of the key objectives of the Cluster is to foster collaboration with national authorities and to align the Shelter response with the existing legal, environmental, and developmental frameworks. The Cluster will strive to understand and adhere to the relevant rules and regulations at the national and local levels and to incorporate them into the planning and implementation of Shelter solutions.

The Cluster also recognizes the importance of cross-sectoral coordination and synergies for achieving long-term impact and sustainability of the Shelter interventions. The Cluster will continue to engage with other sectors and clusters to ensure complementarity and coherence of the response and to enhance the outcomes for the displacement-affected people.

The Cluster is guided by the principle of placing the displacement-affected people at the center of the response and respecting their diverse needs and preferences. The Cluster partners are committed to providing a range of Shelter options and modalities that suit the different contexts and situations of the displacement-affected people and empower them to make informed choices.

Reach More

- Optimize to better use resources
- Community participation/contribution and enhancing ownership

Do it Together

- Localization
- Community engagement
- Coordination and collaboration to maximize collective impact

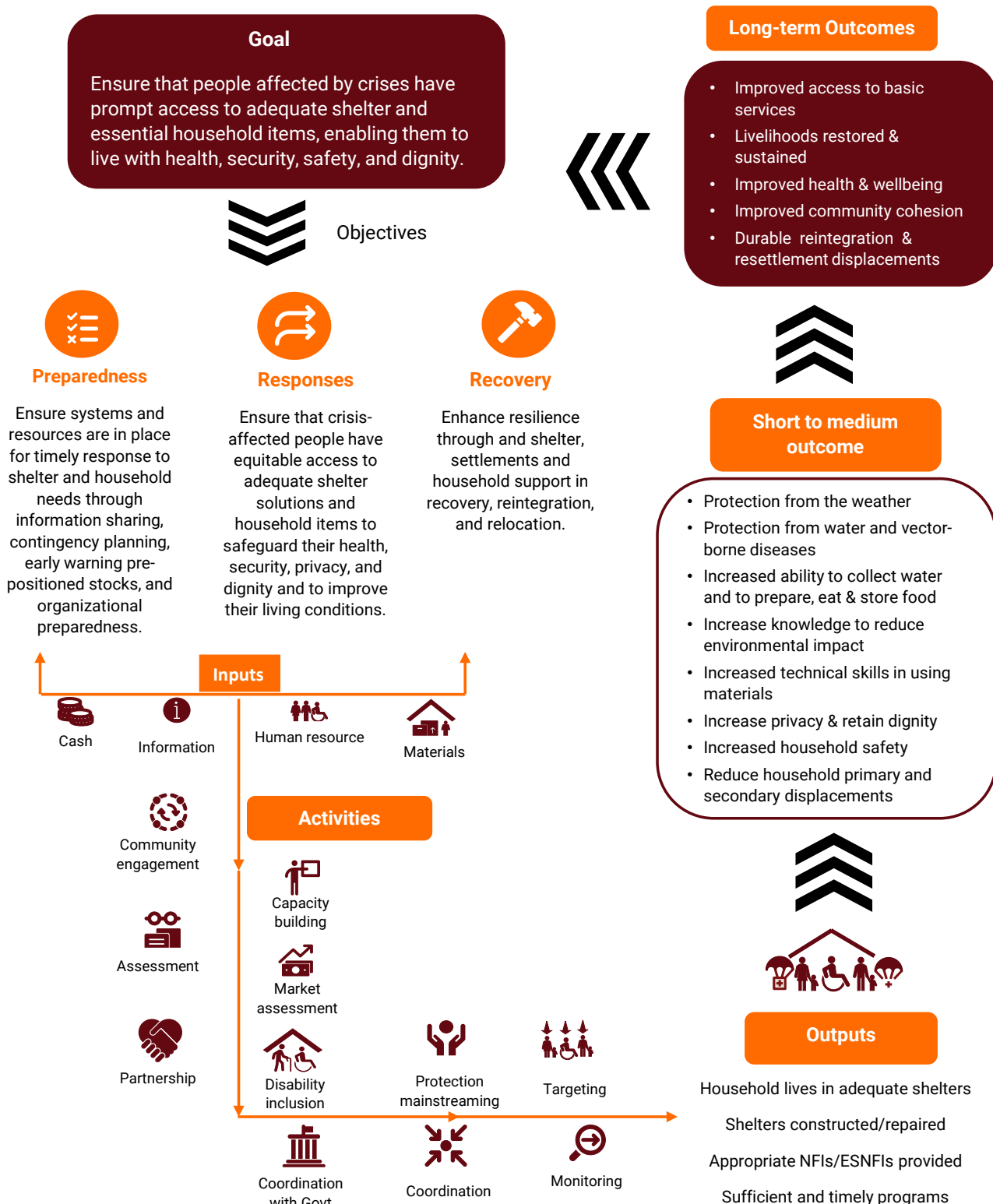


Do it Better

- Using innovation and technology, evidence-based responses
- Making a positive environmental impact
- Protection Mainstreaming, Disability inclusion
- Participation and empowerment of the affected people
- Coordination and collaboration to maximize collective impact
- Resilience

Theory of Change

The Cluster strategy is supported by a comprehensive work plan grounded in the Theory of Change. This work plan systematically tracks the Cluster's progress in alignment with both annual response plans and the multi-year Cluster strategy. To ensure practical and effective monitoring and evaluation of the response, the Cluster leverages feedback from Cluster Partners, thereby identifying key challenges and lessons learned. It is essential for Cluster Partners to utilize the Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit for activity monitoring, ensuring data harmonization across the Cluster. Additionally, the Cluster will integrate with the complaints systems of Cluster Partners to gather effective feedback from their operations and adapt the overall strategy as necessary to maintain accountability.



Guiding Principles

Ethiopia's Shelter and Non-Food Items response is committed to delivering safe, dignified, and inclusive support to displaced and vulnerable populations. It emphasizes the importance of not exacerbating conflicts or creating additional risks, all while ensuring that every intervention is guided by principles of transparent communication and accountability to the affected communities. Inclusiveness is paramount, ensuring that access to services is equitable for all, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or disability.

Environmental sustainability is also a priority, with measures implemented to minimize environmental impact. This approach promotes robust inter-sectoral coordination to guarantee that interventions are integrated and address the most pressing needs. Community participation is essential, as it fosters a sense of ownership and resilience, thereby reducing long-term dependency on aid. The overall response is context-driven, meticulously tailored to the specific needs of the populations, with a focus on prioritizing the most vulnerable.



Accountability

Humanitarian agencies are accountable to crisis-affected populations, donors, and governments at all stages of shelter programming. Responses must include mechanisms for transparent information-sharing, enabling communities to make informed decisions in line with the Core Commitments for People in Humanitarian Action. This also requires that affected populations have opportunities to provide feedback, share concerns, and submit complaints.

Shelter and NFI programs should ensure their projects involve all community groups and have mechanisms for feedback. These programs must adapt based on the feedback to remain relevant and responsive to evolving needs, a core element of CCPM.



Do not Harm

Shelter and NFI assistance prioritizes those assisted's safety, health, security, privacy, and dignity. The Shelter and NFI response needs to ensure assessments and analyses incorporate conflict-sensitive approaches to address the needs of men, women, girls, boys, and persons with disabilities.

Responses must not exacerbate tensions or lead to negative impacts like increased GBV risks, deprivation, or coercion. Assistance must avoid promoting non-voluntary population movements and unnecessary secondary displacement. Additionally, feedback mechanisms must be in place to ensure interventions remain relevant and responsive to evolving needs.



Ensure Meaningful Access

Shelter and NFI programs should ensure that services are proportional to needs and that all people, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, or any other diversity, have equitable access to impartial assistance. Partners should understand barriers to access that could influence the people's ability to participate in Shelter and NFI interventions.

Additionally, Shelter and NFI programs shall ensure that Shelter/NFI services are within safe and easy reach and that the beneficiaries know of potential distribution dates that are culturally appropriate. Special measures should be taken to ensure inclusiveness regardless of ethnicity.

Localization

National NGOs contribute invaluablely to humanitarian operations; hence, the Cluster needs to meaningfully engage with them in coordination and decision-making processes. The Cluster will strengthen localization by encouraging partnership-based humanitarian response, capacity strengthening, increasing access to financial resources, and influence and leadership in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.



Evidence-Based Action and Decision Making

Partners must systematically gather and analyze information to ensure that responses are both relevant and effective. Continuous assessment and evaluation of the provided assistance are crucial for determining its appropriateness. By leveraging evidence-based insights, partners can continuously refine and enhance their response strategies, ensuring that support consistently aligns with the evolving needs of affected populations. This approach fosters more targeted, efficient, and impactful interventions, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of humanitarian efforts.



Coordination for Integrated Programming

Shelter and NFI responses must be closely coordinated with other sectors, such as WASH, Protection, Education, CCCM, Health, and Food, to create a holistic approach. Effective partnership with all stakeholders is essential to ensure the response's impact and long-term sustainability. Integrated, multi-sectoral interventions are necessary to meet the priority needs of affected populations, with protection at the core. To enhance sustainability, strengthening partnerships with local NGOs and government structures at all levels is crucial for building a more resilient and effective response system.

Expectations Must be Managed

Managing expectations is essential in shelter and NFI response efforts. Maintaining clear communication with stakeholders ensures effective interventions and upholds dignity and safety. Shelter and NFI actors must transparently convey assistance details, clarifying recipients' entitlements and community contributions. Communicating with non-recipients about the criteria and reasons for assistance allocation is equally important. Open dialogue and realistic expectations build trust, reduce tensions, and foster an inclusive environment.

Context Driven Responses

The response strategy must be context-driven due to the crisis scale and resource limitations. Not all crises warrant emergency support; interventions should be prioritized based on specific needs, considering local climate and cultural norms. This ensures effective resource allocation, focusing on critical areas and providing relevant assistance, thereby optimizing impact and preserving the dignity and safety of affected communities.

Targeting

Targeting must be based solely on need, prioritizing the most vulnerable and urgent cases within the affected population. A people-centered approach should be employed, emphasizing needs-based, protection-focused, and evidence-based criteria to ensure assistance is provided transparently, accountably, and coherently. House-to-house verification is mandatory to minimize inclusion and exclusion errors. However, lifesaving responses should not be delayed during this process.

Long-term Solutions

Ensuring long-term community capabilities in humanitarian shelter responses is essential. This includes addressing immediate needs while promoting future self-sufficiency with adaptable, durable, and culturally appropriate shelter solutions. Utilizing local materials and engaging communities in planning fosters ownership and skill development. Integrating livelihoods, infrastructure, and environmental considerations enhances the community's ability to rebuild and thrive independently over time.

Program Considerations

Settlements as a whole, as well as individual shelters or “homes,” are often the places where people seek well-being and safety. The Shelter program is critical in allowing dignity and recovery after a crisis. It must be habitable and provide physical safety, adequate space, and protection against cold, dampness, heat, rain, wind, and other health climatic threats. In implementing this strategy and Shelter programs, consideration must be given to various cross-cutting issues essential to a comprehensive and inclusive response. Some of these considerations are directly associated with stand-alone programs, while others must be integrated within the project. A key component of these responses is the provision of NFI kits, which are essential in supporting the immediate and long-term needs of the affected population. By addressing these basic needs, NFI kits play a significant role in complementing shelter efforts, ensuring that the community has the necessary resources to maintain their living conditions, manage health risks, and support recovery.

Protection and GBV

Shelter provides Protection. It also needs to provide protection from gender-based violence (GBV). While Shelter practitioners should not replace GBV and Protection specialists, good shelter programming must include mitigation measures throughout the project cycle to reduce GBV risks across their programs, ultimately contributing to better shelter outcomes. Ensuring privacy, dignity, and a feeling of safety can greatly influence families’ security and well-being so that people can access lifesaving services. Therefore, GBV integration should not be seen as an additional task to add to Shelter practitioners’ to-do lists; it can be understood as an integral approach to programming, which includes the fundamental principles of risk analysis, participation, inclusion, consultation, and engagement with the affected communities.

Abiding by these principles ultimately contributes to the overall objective of good shelter programming. For all projects, responders must undertake careful planning, accurate and up-to-date assessments and registration, and adequate targeting, as well as ensure that all people can access, receive, and effectively use the assistance provided appropriately.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

ES/NFI Cluster partners are responsible for ensuring that all staff, service providers, contractors, volunteers, partners, and those involved in program implementation understand that there is zero tolerance for abuse of power or exchange of access to assistance for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Gender

The needs, roles, and responsibilities related to shelter and non-food items (NFIs) vary among women, men, girls, and boys within the community. To ensure that all individuals affected by a crisis receive equitable benefits from response efforts, it is crucial to integrate gender considerations into shelter and NFI planning and programming. ES/NFI partners should gather age- and sex-disaggregated data, including specific information on the needs of men, women, boys, and girls, during assessments. Furthermore, shelter construction and NFI distribution must account for gender-specific preferences and concerns. Program managers for shelter and NFIs are encouraged to prioritize the recruitment of female staff to enhance gender-sensitive approaches and ensure that the needs of women and girls are adequately addressed.

Environmental Protection

Projects must take into consideration local environmental impacts. Sites and shelter interventions should avoid over-densification, which in turn can cause significant local environmental degradation. Wherever possible, shelter projects should seek ways to mitigate the damage that firewood collection, livestock, and collection of shelter materials can have on fragile environments. Such damage can cause long-term negative impacts on host and displaced populations.

Furthermore, using local markets and local materials whenever possible will reduce carbon emissions, and decommissioning and management of waste generated from the distribution and construction of emergency shelters should also be part of the implementation.

People Who Require Special Attention

One of the key principles of humanitarian action is to ensure that no one is left behind and that all people have equal access to assistance and Protection. Older People and Persons with Disability often face multiple barriers that prevent them from participating in and benefiting from emergency shelter and non-food item (NFI) interventions. These barriers can be physical, environmental, attitudinal, or institutional, and the crisis situation can exacerbate them. Therefore, shelter and NFI partners are responsible for ensuring that their programs are inclusive and responsive to the needs and capacities of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Some of the ways to achieve this are:

- Enhance vulnerability assessment tools - Vulnerability assessments should capture the diversity of needs and preferences of women, men, girls, older people and boys with different types of disabilities, as well as the skills, resources, and coping mechanisms of individuals and households when targeting and delivering shelter and NFI assistance.
- Improve consultation and participation mechanisms - Older People and Persons with Disability should be involved in all stages of the program cycle, from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Consultation methods should be adapted to the communication and accessibility needs of different groups of persons with disabilities, using various formats and channels.

Provide tailored and integrated solutions - Shelter and NFI interventions should consider the specific requirements and preferences of Older People and Persons with Disability and provide them with appropriate options and choices that suit their situation. You will find the ES/NFI Cluster

In the preparedness and recovery phases: Establish criteria for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their caregivers in community decision-making structures and processes, including training that enhances capacities (and, in turn, reduces risk).

In emergency phases: Adapt risk analysis and mitigation tools (e.g. contextual analysis, post-distribution, and quality assurance monitoring) to include questions and actions focusing on breaking down isolation and ensuring the dignity of persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

Housing Land and Properties (HLP)

Shelter programs must actively ensure that those they seek to assist have sufficient tenure security, are safe from eviction and that projects do not create undue claims of land and property. For example, a Shelter program that does not take into account tenure claims over the land on which a Shelter is built can lead to future conflict or eviction of beneficiaries.

Host Communities

Targeting the IDPs and returnees needs to consider the pressures placed on often vulnerable host communities in terms of access to needed assistance and the additional pressures on limited natural resources and infrastructure. Relevant stakeholders should promote the elaboration of strategies covering short, middle, and long-term needs, adopting agreed vulnerability selection criteria to ensure that the most vulnerable are not neglected regardless of their status

Participation and Empowerment of Affected People

A participatory approach is crucial for enhancing Protection in humanitarian responses, as it empowers affected individuals to be central to decision-making about their own safety and well-being. In Shelter programs, integrating gender equality, disability, respect for rights, and Protection into the design of interventions is essential for ensuring these principles are upheld.

Active community involvement throughout the project cycle is critical to delivering quality programming and fostering a sense of ownership. Shelter and NFI programs should focus on developing self-protection capacities and encouraging communities to engage in monitoring and decision-making processes. Programs that involve communities in these ways are more likely to achieve their objectives, as they recognize and incorporate local knowledge, capabilities, and cultural norms into all activities.

Response Options

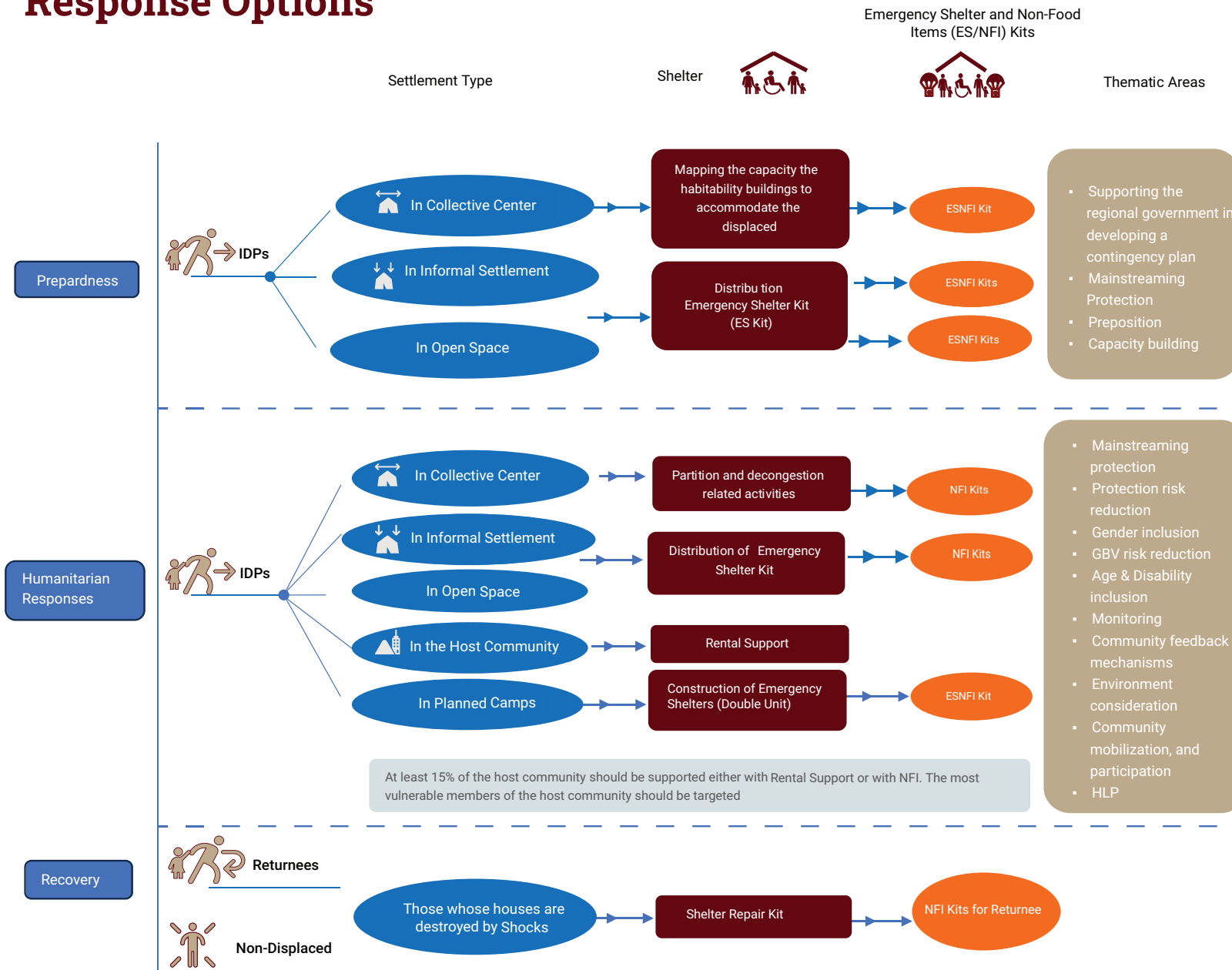


Photo: ESNFI Cluster

Monitoring

The ES/NFI Cluster recognizes the inherent challenges and risks of operating in humanitarian contexts, such as the possibility of implementation and financial management issues due to the scope and complexity of the operation, as well as the potential damage to the reputation of the partners involved in a rapid and low-quality response. To mitigate these risks, it is paramount to ensure high service delivery standards and demonstrate its effectiveness through credible, frequent and transparent performance information that is shared with the affected population and other stakeholders. This performance information also enhances the accountability of the humanitarian partners towards the Cluster, which they collectively share the responsibility to provide adequate and timely services to the population in need of humanitarian assistance. The ES/NFI Cluster has developed standard cluster performance monitoring tools and methods to assess the progress and impact of its activities. The Cluster will require all stakeholders' active involvement and contribution to monitor the efficiency and quality of coordination.

The strategy requires a collaborative approach from the Cluster members, who share the responsibility and accountability for its implementation. The Cluster members are expected to actively contribute to the operationalization and monitoring of the strategic plan, which aims to achieve ambitious goals. The strategy will be supported by a work plan that follows the Theory of Change. The work plan will track the progress of the annual response plans and the multi-year cluster strategy. The Cluster will foster practical and effective monitoring and evaluation of the response through agencies, who will gather and share feedback among partners to identify key challenges and lessons learned. Agencies will use the Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit documents to guide their program planning and support the evaluation of the response cycle. The Cluster will connect with agency complaints systems to ensure feedback from partner operations is received and the strategy is adjusted accordingly, ensuring the strategy is relevant and accountable.

Exit Strategy

Ethiopia continues to face significant humanitarian and Protection challenges, and the situation remains a concern. When planning an exit strategy, it is crucial to consider both the role and mandate of the government and the pursuit of durable solutions. For a successful transition and exit, it is essential to address the needs of IDPs and Returnees in a coordinated and integrated manner. This approach includes the restoration of private and public infrastructure and basic services in return areas, which should be addressed with the active involvement of local authorities and relevant departments.

In cases where Shelter assistance creates opportunities for durable solutions, the Cluster will coordinate with durable solution working groups to enhance these efforts. Additionally, through its Shelter activities, the Cluster will contribute to reviving the local economy, thereby supporting sustainable, long-term solutions.

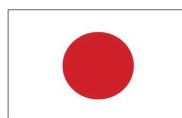
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