



**GLOBAL
SHELTER CLUSTER**

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

2024-2028 GSC STRATEGY

SHELTER: LIFE SAVING, LIFE ENABLING

2024-2028 SOFT LAUNCH VERSION | JUNE 2024

www.sheltercluster.org



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RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER

The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is a coordination mechanism established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to ensure that people affected by disaster- and conflict-induced displacement have access to safe, dignified and appropriate shelters and settlements. The GSC facilitates effective collaboration among shelter and settlements actors to deliver timely and quality humanitarian assistance to those in need.¹ The GSC and country Shelter Clusters work collectively with national response actors to support people affected by disaster and conflict with timely, effective and predictable global leadership in shelter and settlement responses. The GSC is a public platform co-led by UNHCR and IFRC at the global level and has partners who actively contribute to discussions and outputs. At the global level, IFRC convenes the Shelter Cluster in disaster contexts, while UNHCR leads the Shelter Cluster in conflict situations. Clusters are not activated in refugee settings, where instead the Refugee Coordination Model² would apply.

The Global Cluster leads are accountable for system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and for ensuring predictable and effective inter-agency responses. Specifically, leads are responsible for establishing broad partnership bases that engage in:



STANDARDS AND
POLICY-SETTING



BUILDING
RESPONSE CAPACITY



OPERATIONAL
SUPPORT

The Global Cluster supports country clusters in meeting their **SIX CORE FUNCTIONS**:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | SUPPORTING
SERVICE DELIVERY | 3 | PLANNING AND
IMPLEMENTING
CLUSTER STRATEGIES | 5 | BUILDING NATIONAL
CAPACITY IN
PREPAREDNESS
AND CONTINGENCY
PLANNING |
| 2 | INFORMING THE
HUMANITARIAN
COORDINATOR /
HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY
TEAM'S STRATEGIC
DECISION MAKING | 4 | MONITORING
AND EVALUATING
PERFORMANCE | 6 | SUPPORTING
ROBUST ADVOCACY ³ |

¹ The purpose and role of the GSC and all global clusters are defined by the IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response.

² The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) was developed to ensure more accountable, inclusive, predictable and transparent leadership and effective co-ordination in responding to refugee situations. It builds on the key role governments have in leading refugee responses and provides UNHCR and partners with a blueprint to support government planning, coordination and implementation of the response [link; Refugee Coordination Model \(RCM\) | UNHCR](#)

³ As defined in the [IASC Cluster Coordination Reference Module](#)



GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

VISION

THE GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER ENVISIONS A WORLD WHERE ALL PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HUMANITARIAN CRISES HAVE TIMELY ACCESS TO SAFE, DIGNIFIED, AND APPROPRIATE SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT SOLUTIONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING.

EVIDENCE AND
INNOVATION

OBJECTIVE

TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION, THE GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER PARTNERS WILL LEAD EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, AND ACCOUNTABLE HUMANITARIAN SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT ACTION TO ACHIEVE EXTENDED IMPACT AND OPTIMAL REACH.

COORDINATION
AND
COLLABORATION

ENABLERS

ACCOUNTABILITY
TO AFFECTED
POPULATIONS

EXTENDED IMPACT

- ✓ PROMOTE INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
- ✓ IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
- ✓ ENABLE SAFE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE, AND PROTECTIVE LIVING CONDITIONS
- ✓ ENABLE RECOVERY AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS FROM THE START

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

OPTIMAL REACH

- ✓ ADVOCATE FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT RESPONSES TO BE PRIORITIZED AND RESOURCED
- ✓ IMPROVE TARGETING OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE
- ✓ INCREASE COVERAGE

ENABLERS

LOCALIZATION

ADVOCACY

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY

BUILDING CAPACITY



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

EXTENDED IMPACT

PROMOTE INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

- Emphasize that shelter is a foundation for wider outcomes
- Demonstrate the consequences of inaction
- Achieve a multi-sectoral approach through linked or joint programming
- Adopt a settlement approach

IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Prioritize environmental considerations in organizational strategies, guidance, and tools
- Strengthen capacity to deliver environmentally sustainable and climate-smart approaches
- Foster an integrated approach to environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Implement locally appropriate shelter solutions

ENABLE SAFE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE, AND PROTECTIVE LIVING CONDITIONS

- Promote the centrality of protection
- Mitigate protection risks, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse
- Be accountable for actions to promote inclusion, considering age, gender, and disability
- Promote housing, land, and property rights

ENABLE RECOVERY AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS FROM THE START

- Foster incremental recovery through long-term planning to increase community resilience
- Apply disaster risk reduction principles
- Support self-recovery and self-reliance to achieve locally appropriate solutions
- Adopt durable shelter solutions
- Transition international coordination mechanisms to local systems

OPTIMAL REACH

ADVOCATE FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT RESPONSES TO BE PRIORITIZED AND RESOURCED

- Respond in a timely and appropriate manner
- Strengthen preparedness, contingency planning and anticipatory action
- Mobilize adequate resources
- Increase donor engagement

IMPROVE TARGETING OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

- Include marginalized populations
- Apply a shelter-severity classification
- Advocate for humanitarian access to affected populations
- Use area-based coordination
- Consider urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts

INCREASE COVERAGE

- Optimize cost versus quality
- Increase multiplier effect
- Use cash and market systems



EXTENDED IMPACT

Shelter and settlements responses provide safe and adequate living conditions enabling essential household and livelihoods activities to be undertaken with dignity after and during crisis. Actions of shelter and settlement responses have the opportunity to extend its impact further by deliberately focusing on the following strategic priorities:

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.1

PROMOTE INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.2

IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.3

ENABLE SAFE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE AND PROTECTIVE LIVING CONDITIONS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.4

ENABLE RECOVERY AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS FROM THE START

Given predicted increases in displacement globally, we must continue to identify opportunities for partnerships that recognize the inter-connectedness of sectoral objectives. It's essential that we actively raise awareness of the potential for shelter and settlements responses to underpin outcomes in other sectors and that we seek ongoing support for extending partnerships and collaboration.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.1

PROMOTE INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO PREPAREDNESS
AND RESPONSE

Populations affected by crises have complex needs that are unlikely to be met by a single sector. When sectors provide isolated humanitarian assistance, they may meet some immediate needs; however, they may also inadvertently undermine or negate the efforts of other sectors. Such a segmented response seldom contributes to extended impacts or longer-term recovery.

Conversely, integrated (or multi-sectoral) assistance, in consultation with affected communities and other stakeholders, can address interlinked and prioritized needs of the affected communities. An integrated response is more likely to achieve the intended humanitarian impacts and outcomes.

The sectors and clusters with which shelter and settlements actors often interact include protection, WASH, CCCM, health and nutrition, food security and livelihood, and logistics. A joint assessment of affected communities with the highest vulnerabilities and high needs must be done collaboratively. This integrated approach must include local and national actors, understanding their contexts, joint decision making, and recovery and sustainability aspirations.

The Settlements Approach Guidance Note developed by GSC's Urban Settlements Working Group lays out four key characteristics and related principles for implementing integrated programming. The four key characteristics are

- ✓ defining specific settlements with high needs
- ✓ working multi-sectorally
- ✓ working with multiple stakeholders
- ✓ considering the whole population

The approach improves collaboration between sectoral actors, national and international stakeholders, donors, and humanitarian and development agencies.

The settlements approach promotes ways for humanitarian and recovery interventions to increase local impact. It is a framework for aid agencies and local stakeholders to plan and deliver more effective, targeted, localized and accountable interventions in humanitarian response.

Operationalizing an integrated approach requires an understanding of its benefits and challenges, both for individual practitioners and their organizations. Implementing agencies should advocate for more integrated programming and resource mobilization.

At the global level, the GSC will proactively engage with inter-agency processes, such as the Global Cluster Coordinators Group and Flagship Initiative, to promote integrated multi-sector responses. It will share knowledge and learning around integrated multi-sector responses and draw on a settlements approach to inform, influence, contribute to, and lead on workstreams as needed.

At the country level, Shelter Clusters will promote the use of a settlements approach among humanitarian country teams, national and local authorities, civil societies, and recovery and development actors.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.2

IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There is strong evidence that not considering the environment, including climate change, in humanitarian responses reduces the effectiveness of assistance and causes long-term harm to disaster survivors. Shelter and settlements programming carries one of the greatest risks of negative environmental impacts within humanitarian response, including from carbon emissions in delivering assistance, the use of plastics and other materials for emergency shelter and non-food items or a failure to proactively manage natural resources and hazards. However, shelter and settlement responses that incorporate environmental considerations can positively impact both affected and host populations. By harnessing nature's solutions, these approaches not only minimize harm but also build resilience and foster long-term benefits.

Achieving these positive outcomes requires a shelter and settlement response cycle based on a deeply integrated environmental approach. This approach should anticipate, assess, mitigate, and improve environmental hazards, vulnerabilities and risks associated with response and recovery. Doing this means breaking down the siloed model of humanitarian assistance delivery, fostering greater effectiveness and cost efficiency. This change will incorporate a cross-sectoral approach tailored to the local context, enhancing resilience in the long term.

Global policy shifts in the last five years have enabled the GSC and partners to prioritize and expand the integration of environmental and climate considerations in shelter and settlement responses. These efforts have ranged from anticipatory action and disaster risk reduction through to response and recovery. Capitalizing on these policy shifts and improving the long-term impact of shelter and settlements assistance, GSC partners should prioritize the systematic integration of environment and climate change into organizational strategies, guidance and tools and strengthen their capacity to deliver environmentally sustainable and climate-smart approaches. This is to be done in collaboration with other sectors and involves an integrated approach including environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation and locally appropriate shelter solutions. Key to this approach is to anticipate, prepare, and adapt for climate change and environmental degradation.

Integrating environmental and climate change considerations into shelter and settlements responses will improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance by reducing harm to crisis-affected populations, improving their living conditions and enabling self-recovery. This will not only save lives in the near term but will also contribute to durable solutions that save the lives of future generations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.3

ENABLE SAFE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE AND PROTECTIVE
LIVING CONDITIONS

Most people who need humanitarian assistance face multiple dimensions of risk: conflict, climate and/or socio-economic vulnerability. Crises and displacement disrupt the social and physical fabric of communities and exacerbate inequalities and power imbalances. These manifest in increased protection risks, including risks of gender-based violence, exploitation, abuse, discrimination, eviction and exclusion.

For our partners, providing safe, secure and protected living conditions is ultimately about upholding people's rights to protection, security, and to life with dignity.

Supporting families access a place they can call 'home' can be both lifesaving and life enabling. Shelter and settlements interventions are essential as they provide more than physical protection from the elements. They also provide a sense of dignity, privacy and security and enable the restoration of livelihoods and social networks.

Adopting a people- and protection-centered approach to crisis response prevents and mitigates harm, promotes rights and well-being, and empowers affected populations.

Our responses should:

- ✓ Respect and uphold populations' housing, land and property rights, applying a gender, protection and climate change lens. Responses must include due diligence and reduce the risks of violations of rights, such as forced evictions, dispossession or discrimination.
- ✓ Avoid causing or exacerbating harm and consider unintended consequences of our actions on the most vulnerable.
- ✓ Involve affected populations at all stages, from assessment to evaluation. This promotes understanding of their needs capacities and aspirations and promotes ownership and self-reliance.
- ✓ Provide safe, accessible and effective mechanisms for managing feedback and complaints.
- ✓ Ensure equitable access to assistance, considering age, gender, disability, socio-cultural identity and the specific needs of different groups.
- ✓ Ensure that the environments in which people seek shelter, including individual or collective accommodation, are safe, secure, accessible and appropriate and avoid marginalization.
- ✓ Consider the evolving and multi-dimensional needs of populations and adapt to provide the most appropriate support for recovery and self-reliance.

Integrating protection principles into shelter and settlements responses will improve the quality, appropriateness, relevance and effectiveness of our collective efforts and will ensure positive impact on the lives of people we serve.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.4

ENABLE RECOVERY AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS FROM THE START

Linking humanitarian actions to longer-term thinking, understanding priority needs, and adapting responses to specific contexts are crucial to enabling recovery and finding durable solutions to displacement.

Recovery from a humanitarian crisis starts immediately but is a long-term process. From the outset, we must consider how short-term, life-saving humanitarian interventions will support recovery and consider how those displaced and affected by crisis can be supported in the achievement of durable solutions.

Most people affected by humanitarian crises do not receive humanitarian aid and will self-recover. Providing agency to those people and creating an enabling environment for recovery can be an effective way to support them.

Shelter and settlements programming is needed to enable durable solutions. It improves the living conditions in areas of return, local integration or relocation, and ensures adequate access to shelter or housing and settlement-level infrastructure and services.

Restoring or strengthening housing, land and property rights reduces vulnerability and is an essential component of recovery and achieving durable solutions.



Our collective actions should

- ✓ Support and facilitate integrated approaches with other sectors and address the need for infrastructure and services that support entire communities.
- ✓ Actively seek alternatives to camps and apply urban planning principles in displacement settings as a critical enabler.
- ✓ Build resilience of people, places and systems while enhancing preparedness. Support and use humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles.
- ✓ Support and use humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles.→
- ✓ Acknowledge that local actors have a strong leadership role and promote and support the primary role of government in recovery efforts when appropriate.
- ✓ Ensure that affected people, in all their diversity, have a voice in all phases of crises response.
- ✓ Promote women's and girls' voices and leadership in socio-economic recovery and peace building, as they are often the most affected by inadequate housing and are frequently excluded from decision making.
- ✓ Ensure that women's rights, including tenure rights, are respected, enhanced and prioritized.
- ✓ Use incremental methods to aid recovery, such as core housing or transitional shelters that can be transformed, and support self-recovery, including through repairs or rental assistance.
- ✓ Advocate for and catalyze enhanced access to adequate housing by building on data and evidence.
- ✓ Support self-reliance by working closely with livelihoods and economic development partners to ensure shelter and settlements designs facilitate income-generating activities.
- ✓ Ensure that technical assistance, advocacy and policy changes address the realities of climate change and environmental degradation, while also considering socio-cultural, physical and financial sustainability.
- ✓ 'Build back better', using 'better' in the widest sense, learning from experience and building on local and international expertise.



OPTIMAL REACH

Disasters, conflicts and unprecedented displacement are occurring more frequently. Optimal reach in those conditions requires humanitarians to:

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.1

ADVOCATE FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT RESPONSES TO BE PRIORITIZED AND RESOURCED

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.2

IMPROVE TARGETING OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.3

INCREASE COVERAGE

The need for timely and well-resourced shelter and settlement responses is not just pressing, it is critical. Millions of displaced people around the world are in unsafe shelter and living conditions that exacerbate their suffering, increasingly with little hope of return. There is an *urgent* need to advocate for and secure timely shelter and settlement responses. To achieve that, we must look beyond current humanitarian funding sources to government budget and programmes and private sector markets.

By addressing critical gaps and overcoming significant challenges, we aim to restore dignity, stability and hope to affected populations.

As such, making progress to achieve an optimal reach will be in direct support of realizing the GSC's vision of a world where all people affected by humanitarian crises have timely access to safe, dignified and appropriate shelter and settlement solutions, in accordance with the humanitarian principles and the right to adequate housing.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.1

ADVOCATE FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT RESPONSES TO BE
PRIORITIZED AND RESOURCED

Continued advocacy for shelter and settlement responses to be prioritized and resourced is critical. The living conditions of millions of people affected by disaster, conflict and climate change demand immediate, sustained and continued attention and action. Several key challenges highlight why this issue cannot wait.

Coordination is not an accessory to the response, it is a key building block. Delays in response lead to unnecessary suffering and complicate recovery efforts. Effective coordination among agencies and stakeholders is essential to ensure aid reaches those in need promptly and efficiently.

Being prepared is crucial to mitigate disaster impacts. Robust contingency plans enable rapid, organized responses, reducing chaos and inefficiencies in emergencies. Learning from past experiences and foreseeing future trends through the collective lens that GSC can offer will add value to these efforts.

Timely allocation of sufficient financial, human and material resources is vital. Consequently, aligning the interventions to the available funding as effectively as possible can only be ensured through coordination. Without these, even the most well-designed plans cannot be effectively implemented, and it will be futile to talk about any real and lasting impact.

Strong relationships with donors, built on transparent and constructive exchange and collaboration, establishes trust and aligns priorities. Such relationships are essential for securing ongoing support and resources to address the humanitarian shelter and settlement needs of affected populations.

Addressing current shelter and settlements challenges and predicting and preparing for future challenges will require strong and genuine partnerships, sharing data, knowledge and capacity, and joint analysis and advocacy. Over the past years, the GSC partners have taken significant strides in building a sense of belonging and cooperation to initiate and engage in these areas.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.2

IMPROVE TARGETING OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Improved targeting mechanisms allow humanitarians to allocate available resources to those who most require them, thereby optimizing humanitarian reach and upholding the dignity and well-being of communities affected by disaster. More effective targeting can also foster greater accountability and transparency within the humanitarian system.

Improved targeting requires humanitarians to determine where and to whom they should direct resources, and then to develop strategies to effectively execute this targeting. Tools like the Shelter Severity Classification system⁴ are useful for prioritizing interventions and directing resources towards groups with age-, disability- and gender-related vulnerabilities.

GSC partners and humanitarian coordination systems can actively engage in initiatives aimed at bolstering targeting efficacy. Partnerships can improve the data available for informed decision making. Collaboration with local communities and stakeholders can generate more comprehensive and nuanced datasets for humanitarian actors in the field. Those actors should refine their operational practices to ensure seamless coordination and swift cooperative response in delivering shelter interventions.

Capacity-building initiatives can empower local actors and the affected population to play a more active role in targeting the most vulnerable populations. This will allow the GSC to add the affected populations' perspective to targeting and monitoring processes, thereby improving targeting through triangulation,.

More direct knowledge of the demographics and geographical characteristics of vulnerable populations will allow humanitarians to refine targeting strategies and implementation approaches, including by making interventions more timely.

⁴ The objective of the Shelter Severity Classification methodology is to 1) Determine the level of severity of shelter needs and People in Need 2) Undertake an analysis of the context 3) Identify possible contributors of shelter severity and PiN, and in turn, possible impacts of unmet shelter needs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.3

INCREASE COVERAGE

Coverage is a measure of humanitarian support expressed as a percentage of either the number of people in need or the number of people targeted. The number of people targeted balances assessed needs with the combined resource capacity and efficiency of international, national and local actors, including Shelter Cluster partners.

The number of people in need globally (measured through HRPs, flash appeals and other coordinated appeals) has more than doubled in the last decade. Shelter Clusters therefore need to reach more people with the resources available. Strengthened coordination and accountability to affected people may increase efficiency, including localization mechanisms to ensure strategies are informed and made jointly with affected people and local authorities.

More cost-efficient response strategies will be achieved by incorporating local solutions, practices and resources when designing shelter responses, and making use of existing or developed markets. The use of cash, where possible and appropriate, can strengthen market capacities both for people targeted for assistance and for those who are self-recovering while at the same time providing economic benefits to the affected population. This multiplier effect may have residual benefits that contribute to further response efficiencies, effectiveness, and longer-term recovery. Including a variety of shelter and settlement solutions, including hosting, rental, as well as individual shelters, may also increase coverage rates.

Response strategies need also consider durability when calculating overall efficiencies and the implications this has for scale. Strategies that reduce dependency may require an initial resource input that over time has greater benefit in terms of numbers of people assisted. Achieving durability while maximizing the number of people receiving immediate essential shelter assistance is a challenge, where incremental strategies may achieve adequate durability over time. For example, investing in durable materials may reduce future repair and replacement costs and prove cost effective over the response period, providing net savings to assist more people.

Coordination and collaboration of support system actors (including humanitarian, development, government, markets) has a direct impact on the immediate and longer-term capacity for scale. System-thinking approaches provide an analysis of the response and existing systems to leverage existing and potential capacity for both quality and scaled outcomes. This can improve efficiency of existing resources and has the potential to drive system changes that have scale outcomes, such as changes in government policy or a market reaction.

ENABLERS

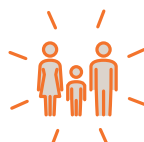
FOUR ENABLERS have been identified as potential opportunities for partners to ignite the vision and achieve strategic priorities:



1 | COORDINATION & COLLABORATIONS



2 | LOCALIZATION



3 | ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS



4 | EVIDENCE & INNOVATION

1 | COORDINATION AND COLLABORATIONS

Coordination and collaboration are pivotal in enhancing humanitarian shelter and settlements action, especially given the scale and complexities of humanitarian crises. No single agency can address all the needs of the world's most vulnerable populations. The sheer magnitude of these challenges requires a multiplicity of actors to come together, pooling their resources, expertise and capacities to provide more effective and efficient responses.

Strengthening coordination with national and local governments is essential as they have intimate knowledge of affected regions and can facilitate more effective operations, regulatory compliance and community engagement. Governments also mobilize substantial resources and ensure that humanitarian efforts align with national priorities and development plans, fostering sustainability and long-term resilience.

Collaboration with development and peace actors, institutions and donors ensures that humanitarian responses are not isolated from broader developmental and peace-building efforts. Such integration can enhance the sustainability of shelter and settlement projects, ensuring that they contribute to long-term stability and development rather than just providing immediate relief.

Engaging the private sector and civil society brings additional strengths to humanitarian shelter and settlement actions. The private sector can offer innovative solutions, technical expertise and logistical support, while civil society organizations bring grassroots connections, local knowledge and community trust. These partnerships enable more culturally appropriate and context-specific interventions, enhancing the overall effectiveness and acceptance of humanitarian efforts.

In essence, coordination and collaboration among these diverse actors foster a holistic approach to humanitarian shelter and settlements, leveraging each actor's strengths to cover gaps, improve resource use, and ultimately provide more comprehensive and impactful support to those in need.

2 | LOCALIZATION

Localization involves recognizing the critical role of local and national actors in leading, shaping and implementing humanitarian action, emphasizing a shift in power dynamics. Investing in localization promotes respect, equitable relationships and partnerships, making humanitarian assistance more effective, efficient and sustainable. Within Shelter Clusters, increased localization can enhance coordination quality, elevate participation and strengthen partnerships. This includes fostering local leadership, expanding participation of local and national actors in strategic advisory groups and improving sub-national coordination to facilitate meaningful participation. Supporting the financing of humanitarian action through local and national actors, such as through country-based pooled funds, and crafting shelter and settlement response strategies informed by local knowledge and practices are essential.

This new strategy reinforces the GSC's commitment to localization, focusing on recognizing local responders and adopting a crisis-affected people-centred approach. By strengthening local-level decision making, the strategy aims to provide relevant, accountable and localized responses. This entails creating meaningful spaces for local and national actors to take and influence leadership and strategic decisions, ensuring that humanitarian action is well-informed and effectively implemented. The renewed emphasis on localization underscores the importance of local actors in driving sustainable and impactful humanitarian efforts.

3 | ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Accountability to affected people (AAP) is a global commitment by humanitarian actors to take account of, give account to and be held to account by the people humanitarian organizations seek to assist. Promoting and strengthening AAP is also one of the core functions of a cluster. People affected by crises must be at the center of any Shelter Cluster response. This means that affected people must be supported to meaningfully participate and lead decision-making in an inclusive manner, with consideration being given to age, gender and diversity. Affected people must also be provided with timely, relevant and actionable information, alongside being able to provide feedback on the Shelter Cluster response, with their feedback being acted upon. Tied in with localization is also the need to engage, support and partner with local and national organizations, including those that represent different groups such as women, girls, young people and people with disabilities.

Understanding the different needs, risks and barriers affected people face and supporting their leadership in decision-making enhances the Shelter Cluster's strategic focus on optimal reach and extended impact. It allows the Shelter Cluster to improve targeting of the most vulnerable people in need of shelter and enable safe, secure, accessible and protective living conditions tailored to individual needs.

4 | EVIDENCE AND INNOVATION

The GSC seeks, generates and manages high-quality and reliable evidence to ensure more ethical, effective and accountable humanitarian assistance.⁵ Evidence provides a robust platform to uphold humanitarian principles, to improve the quality of programming, and to strengthen the credibility of budgets and strategies. Promising approaches require evidence to catalyze innovation and scalability. An evidence-based approach enables extended impact and optimal reach.

Extended impact is supported by evidence of the wider impact of shelter and settlements, including environmental impact, and evidence of the shared benefits of durable solutions, including safety and security.

Optimal reach is supported by evidence of capacity, needs and scale, plus evidence to inform advocacy for appropriate resources. Evidence enables the Shelter Cluster to adapt to local contexts, use longer-term thinking and avoid repeated mistakes.⁶ For this reason, rapid and easy access to qualitative and quantitative data, primary and secondary data, and relevant research findings is critical to generating evidence in humanitarian crises.

The Shelter Cluster is well-placed to inform and to innovate, using its access to data at the global and the local level, plus its relationships with a range of key stakeholders. It collects, manages and analyses data to answer both operational and strategic questions. This includes both the operational questions posed by needs assessment and capacity analysis, vulnerability and context analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and the strategic questions posed by policy-making and advocacy. The Shelter Cluster communicates data and research findings using a range of approaches, matching the format to the appropriate audience. These include operational dashboards, HRP outputs, practitioner-facing publications and peer-reviewed research papers.

⁵ Adapted from ALNAP: A lack of evidence makes humanitarian action less effective, less ethical and less accountable.

⁶ [GSC Research Baseline Report FINAL | Shelter Cluster](#)



MODALITY

Advocacy and strengthening capacities are two effective modalities for GSC partners to attain the vision and objectives in the Global Shelter Cluster Strategy 2025-2028.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a critical tool for the GSC and its international and country-level partners; it plays a vital role in promoting and safeguarding the right to adequate housing and improving humanitarian standards such as those in the Sphere Handbook. Effective advocacy influences policies and mobilizes resources, ensuring that shelter needs are prioritized in humanitarian responses and planning for durable solutions.

At its core, effective advocacy raises awareness among policy makers, donors, and other relevant stakeholders about the critical issues surrounding shelter and settlements. By highlighting gaps in current policies and showcasing successful interventions, effective advocacy, both public-facing and private, can merit increased funding and vitally needed support. This visibility ensures that shelter is recognized as a fundamental human need that is integral to both overall health and well-being and to recovery in humanitarian crises. Advocacy also fosters collaboration and alignment among diverse stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. By engaging governments, international organizations, NGOs and affected populations, advocacy efforts can standardize approaches and ensure that shelter interventions adhere to globally recognized principles.

To make a tangible impact, advocacy should focus on several strategic areas. One is using evidence-based research at its core as data and real-life stories objectively illustrate the urgent need for adequate shelter. Another is policy dialogue, where continuous engagement with decision-makers can lead to policy reforms that protect the right to adequate housing in national legislation and international frameworks. Additionally, leveraging media and public platforms can amplify messaging to garner widespread support and encourage pressure for action.

Advocacy is a vital and compelling modality for Global Shelter Cluster partners to elevate humanitarian standards and influence policy. It can also highlight humanitarian shelter needs and financial requirements, attracting more funding for the Shelter and Settlements Sector. This will support more effective responses to all humanitarian emergencies where Shelter Clusters are formally activated. By strategically employing both public and private advocacy, we can ensure that the right to adequate housing is not only recognized but also realized for all, especially in crisis-affected areas.

CAPACITY

Strengthening response capacities to address escalating global crises through robust global and regional surge capacity is essential. It provides effective humanitarian coordination and technical support to country-level clusters, ensuring timely and efficient shelter responses. The GSC will build response capacity through enhanced training, localized capacity-building, strategic advocacy, and robust partnerships, preparing to meet the shelter needs of vulnerable populations and foster resilience amid increasing humanitarian shelter and settlement needs.

When we align capacity-building with the localization agenda, we empower local actors to design and implement sustainable and contextually relevant interventions, ensuring assistance is both immediate and durable.

Global trends highlight the need for humanitarian shelter and settlements actions that contribute to longer-term, solution-focused outcomes. This approach integrates short-term relief with sustainable development goals, addressing immediate needs while laying the groundwork for durable shelter solutions. Given increasing humanitarian demands, the GSC and its partners must enhance current responses and implement strategies to boost overall capacity.

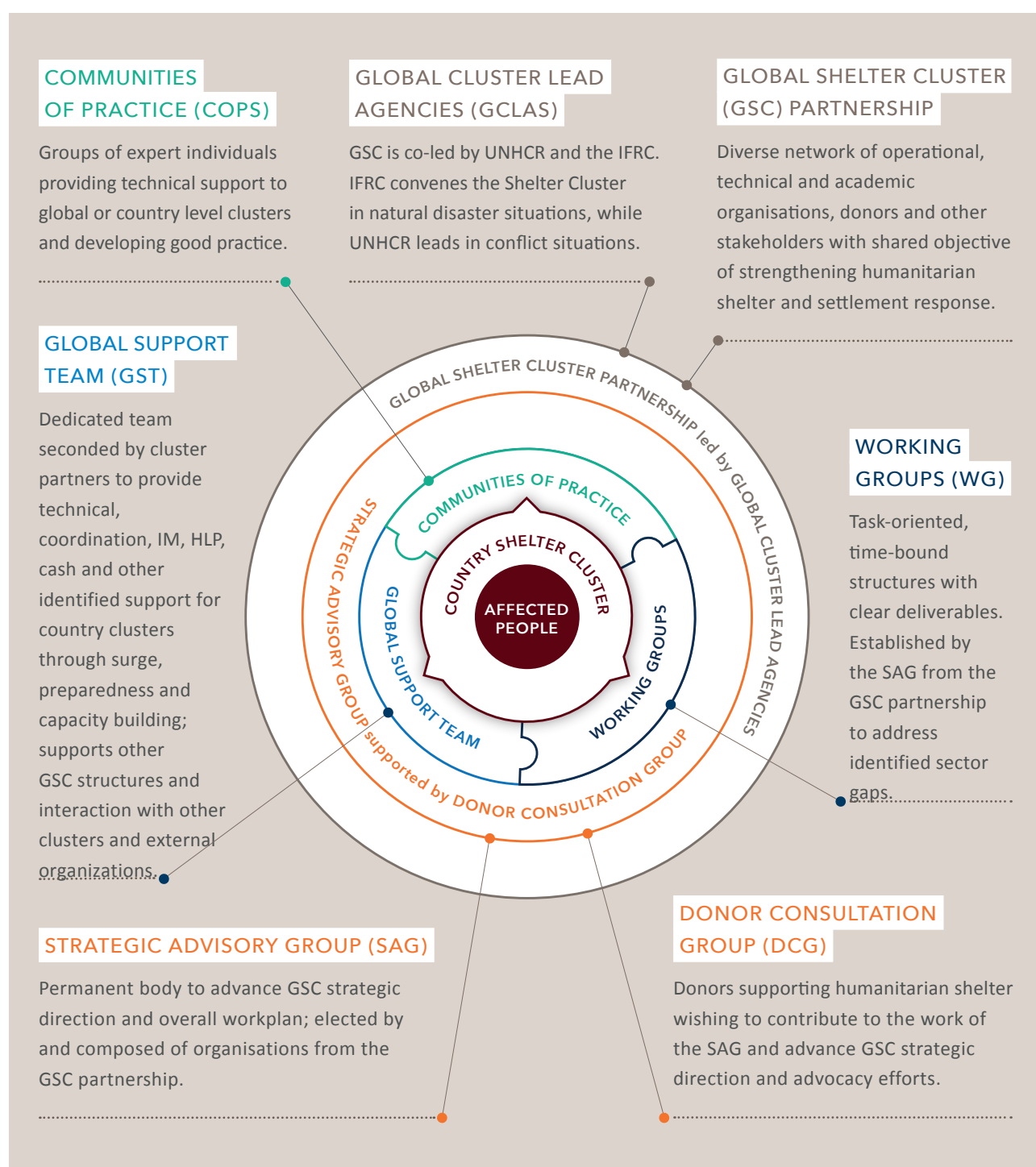
To achieve this, the GSC will expand its training curricula in Humanitarian Shelter Coordination to include two additional training pillars: Humanitarian Shelter Programme Management and Humanitarian Shelter Information Management. These additions will emphasize country and sub-national level capacity-building, equipping practitioners with skills in strategic planning, implementation, and data-driven decision making, and ensure proficiency in operational implementation and information management.

Strengthening partnerships is also critical. The Global Support Team, Working Groups and Communities of Practice, along with broader collaboration with humanitarian, recovery, and development actors, are essential for a cohesive response. Engaging diverse actors, including the private sector and diaspora, is crucial to closing gaps in unmet needs.



GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The diagram below displays the GSC partnership model consisting of a number of interconnecting components, groups which shows the linkage between people affected by crisis at the centre, country-level Shelter Clusters and the Global Shelter Cluster groups.





GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

