

The GSC SAG Retreat 2023 – Summary Observations and Key Points

Date: 29 & 30 November 2023, IMPACT HUB Geneva

Objectives: Review progress in 2023 and define priorities for 2024 and beyond, with emphasis on the new GSC Strategy.

Participants: IMPACT Initiatives, CARE International, CRS, DRC, Habitat for Humanity, IFRC, IOM, InterAction, NRC, UNHCR.

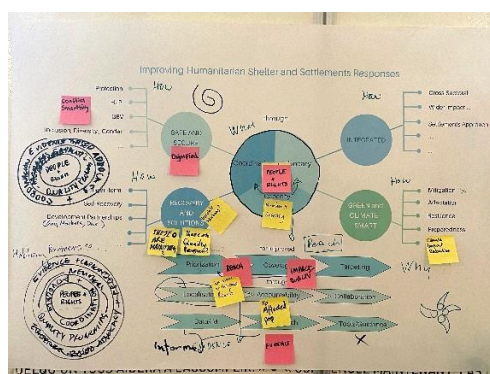
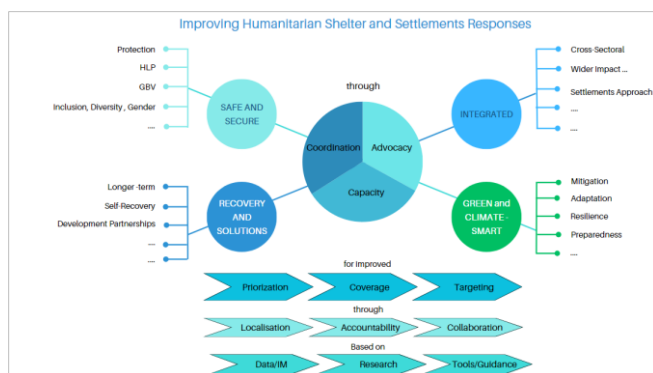
1. Welcome from GSC Coordinators and review of achievements in 2023

After welcome words from the GSC Coordinators, Brett Moore (UNHCR) and Pablo Medina (IFRC), Brett introduced the different efforts, milestones and achievements of the GSC in 2023, starting the session with an overview of the humanitarian context and a summary of the system wide scale-ups, deactivations and ongoing cluster operations. In Nov 2023, there are 31 active Shelter Clusters, providing live saving support to more than 28 million people targeted for assistance. He underlined the funding challenges in the shelter sectors and for clusters worldwide, noting that while the overall amount of money for the sector increased over the last years, the increase of people in need led to reduced funding for most contexts. He also underlined the increase of partners engaging in shelter and settlements, linking this positive trend to the GSC's localization agenda and the IASC recommendations.

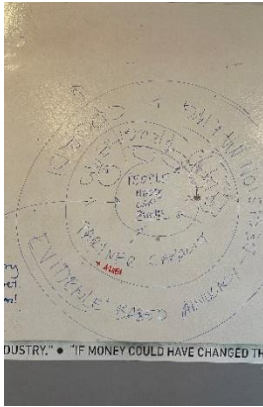
Brett and Pablo also shared an update on the status of the grants of the GSC, inc. the ECHO grant (24 months, July 2021-June 2023), and the BHA grant (ongoing since Oct 2020; recently approved no-cost extension to April 2024; and the "new" BHA grant, 24 months, Oct 2023 – Sept 2025). The session also provided SAG members with an overview of achievements and progress made by the different Working Groups and Communities of Practice as well as an update from the Global Focal Points for Communication; for HLP rights and for Research.

2. Strategy Session 1: Update on the new GSC Strategy

During this first session on the new GSC strategy, Brett introduced the progress made in 2023, linking the processes to currently ongoing global discussions, frameworks and review processes that impact humanitarian system as a whole (inc. the independent review of the Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement, the ERC flagship initiative, the SG's Action Agenda as well as agency specific evaluations, etc.). Building upon the information shared during the annual GSC Meeting (and consultations with SAG members in April 2023) and subsequent development of different arrangements of the strategic priorities, a graphic showing priorities, enablers/drivers and areas of work for the GSC was explained. This graphic was used as a basis for discussion with the SAG members on the way forward for the GSC strategy.



The second part of the session included group work, where SAG members were asked to comment on and share their thoughts on the proposed structure, priorities and detailed areas of work; the terminologies used and the graphic presentation of priorities and different options for interlinking elements.



3. Gareth Price-Jones, Executive Secretary at SCHR - the Steering committee for Humanitarian Response on “Overview of key humanitarian sector-wide challenges”

Gareth Price-Jones gave a short presentation on the current developments and transformation processes in the humanitarian system and highlighted different financial and trend analysis, particularly the likely funding reductions in short-to-medium term donor cycles. He underlined that the shelter and settlements sector (as well as other sectors) will need to prepare for this shift as well as for new requirements from donors.

The subsequent discussion related the trend analysis to the new strategy in a way that considers reduced funding, a higher prioritization as well as flexible concepts to stay abreast of the transformation of the sector and the humanitarian system as a whole. Importantly, it was noted that the sector will need to be explicit in describing outcomes of its core mandate, and what adjacent issues or priorities the sector contributes to but is not responsible for the delivery of.

4. Localization of the SAG and SAG working modalities, composition, and process



The session aimed to create a joint understanding of the impact of including national level actors in the GSC SAG. Brett shared experiences of other clusters with “localizing” their SAGs, which was followed by a discussion on “pros & cons” and groupwork for identifying possible changes and improvements to the SAG ToR.

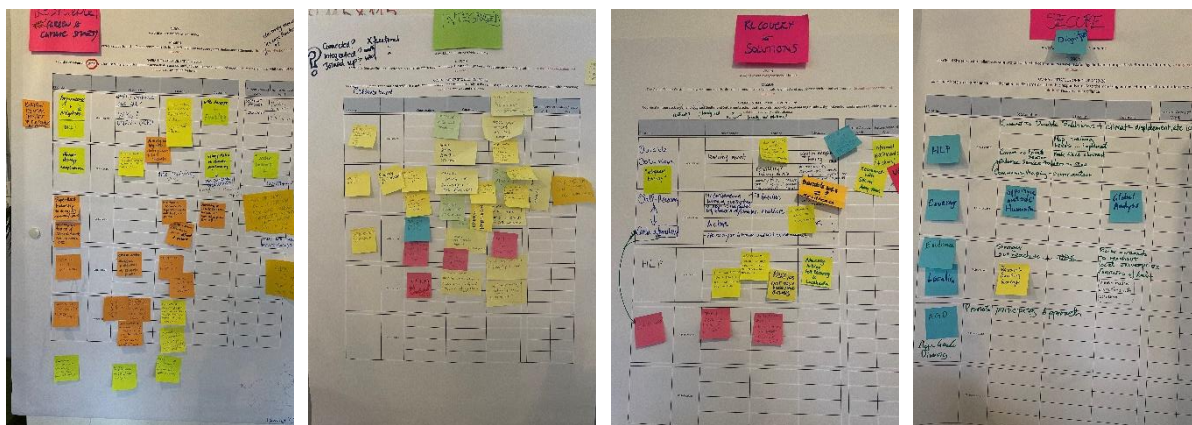
Next steps include a revision of the SAG ToR (by February 2024) and initiating the process for a SAG election to take place before the next annual GSC event (June 2024), in alignment with the responsibilities of the new ToRs.

5. Strategy session 2: Advancing an implementation framework for the GSC Strategy

Building upon the first session on the GSC strategy, the discussions focused on concrete topics and suggestions, acknowledging that the GSC’s main focus continues to be “Coordination, Advocacy and Capacity” for improved humanitarian shelter response. Working in groups, participants worked on large-scale print-outs, developing details for an implementation framework and sharing suggestions for global level actions for the draft priority areas:

- Integrated
- Safe, Secure and Dignified
- Green and climate-smart
- Recovery and Solutions.

Based on the discussions of day 1, it became clear that those terms will be reviewed and revised in the further development of the GSC strategy, further describing linkages and relationships amongst the different strategic elements.



Discussions between participants highlighted different thinking on the various ways strategy elements can be structured and linked, and where primary connections, and secondary connections, can be clarified or reconsidered. SAG members agreed that the task of developing a strategy for the Global Shelter Cluster is complex and has multiple possibilities, as it must relate to evolving global discourses, developments, and trends, and include references to enablers and drivers of change as well as relating to both global and country clusters.

In order to move forward, there will need to be a discussion on the creation of additional Working Groups or Community of Practices for the GSC to push certain topics forward, e.g. a WG on Durable Solutions. As the “Settlements Approach” of the USWG was mentioned as being useful for spatial, cross-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder processes and coordination with other clusters and stakeholders, it was underlined that additional clarity is needed on defining the differences and similarities between the GSC’s “Settlements Approach” and “area-based approaches”, a term used by many other actors.

The suggestions made by the SAG members will help the GSC Coordinators to take the development of the new strategy forward with the precise feedback gathered during the retreat. Further consultations are foreseen with other stakeholders as the strategy develops and the SAG will be consulted in the next steps of the process.

6. A new Logo for the GSC



In this session on the new GSC logo, participants shared what they liked or disliked in the current proposals for a new logo, including fonts, colours as well as text/taglines. It was decided to adapt the tagline of the new logo to “Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements” and to consider a design which would put people more visibly in the “center of the logo” (see picture). The logo should include different shelter types, with various line



type and different colour options. The circle, which was a feature in most of the current proposals, should also be reconsidered.

The designer will be asked to develop two (additional) variations of a logo considering the above to then allow the GSC to take a final decision.

7. Global Shelter Cluster events 2024

This session focused on the Shelter Week (including the GSC Annual Event, the Coordination Workshop as well as the Shelter Meeting, usually held on the Friday of Shelter Week) and also Regional Fora, for which the GSC is a supporter and has been a financial contributor in the past years.



After considering different considerations, including how the events complement each other as well as options for the locations for the GSC Annual Event or the lengths of the coordination workshop, the following points of consensus were reached:

- The GSC Annual Event should continue to be held in Geneva.
- There should be efforts to include a half-day donor group event in the week, with SAG participation to be determined subject to donors' preference.
- SAG members would like a dedicated session with Shelter Cluster Coordinators during the workshop.

Extended discussion focused on the technical vs coordination focus of the week. The SAG members felt that the “coordination focus” of the GSC event does not necessarily need to be linked to the technical focus of the Shelter Meeting, which could be transformed from an in-person to a virtual series of meetings. This would then also allow more actors to benefit from those technical sessions.

The Regional Fora will continue to be organized by at least “two-lead agencies”, and while those agencies would be responsible for

the coordination and organization of the event, the financial contribution of the GSC would be welcome and the GSC support and participation would be according to capacity on a regional basis.

The above will be shared and rediscussed in one of the coming SAG meetings and then decided upon.

Considering the “regional architecture” discussed during the session, it was also suggested that the GSC develops processes to link to cluster-like mechanisms as well as regional coordination mechanisms such as the R4V in LAC.

8. Wrapping up – closing remarks

The last session of the SAG retreat included the wrap up of the retreat and time for the evaluation, but also thanking Brett for his work and engagement with the GSC in the past seven years and wishing him all the best for his next steps.