The objective of the Pacific Shelter Cluster is to support a coherent and effective humanitarian shelter response following disaster events in Pacific Island Countries, underpinned by preparedness and capacity building initiatives. The regional coordination team led by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in accordance with its global shelter cluster mandate, prioritises provision of support to country-level clusters across the Pacific according to their specific needs. Much of this support is provided to National Governments who are responsible for humanitarian response in their countries.

In the first half of 2020, the Pacific Shelter Cluster responded to requests from national governments to support national shelter clusters with the coordination of three country-level emergency responses in Vanuatu and Fiji reaching around 15,530 households (77,770 people) with emergency shelter and essential household items, and technical assistance in terms of safe shelter awareness, trainings and workshops. Recovery shelter guidance was developed as a part of the TC Harold response, seeking to link humanitarian shelter with longer term recovery processes. The Pacific Shelter Cluster also inputted into the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) COVID-19 Response Plan which covers 14 Pacific Island Countries, and continue to support preparedness initiatives detailed below.

If you wish to contribute updates for inclusion in this factsheet, please contact filipe.waqabitu@ifrc.org or robert.dodds@ifrc.org

NEED ANALYSIS

The Pacific region is highly disaster prone, and its populations are particularly vulnerable to natural hazards. The impacts of climate change affect livelihoods, coastal settlements, infrastructure, ecosystems and economic stability in the region. Rise in sea level poses an increasing threat to low-lying coastal areas. Specific shelter vulnerability factors include growing urbanization and the growth of informal settlements, which often result in substandard housing and infrastructure, compounded by social and economic marginalization. Since early 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has added another dimension which has impacted humanitarian shelter preparedness and response.

RESPONSE

PREPAREDNESS and CAPACITY BUILDING

Some of the highlights for the first half of 2020 include:

Vanuatu:

Revision of Environmental Checklist for Shelter Response. This checklist outlines key actions to be taken by the shelter cluster coordination team, program managers and field staff during each phase of the humanitarian program cycle and has been developed by the Shelter Cluster Vanuatu to fill a knowledge gap highlighted during past responses

Development of the Technical guidance material for the use, reuse, repair, and disposal of tarpaulins during the TC Harold response. This has been adapted from Global Shelter Cluster, Environment Community of Practice, and Vanuatu Red Cross guidance materials to create a more user-friendly illustrated guidance note accessible to a wider audience.
Solomon Islands:
Provincial level emergency shelter training package. This has been developed by Solomon Islands Shelter Sub-Committee co-lead Solomon Islands Red Cross with the support of IFRC. This training package aims to strengthen preparedness and response capacity of the shelter sector at local level in the Solomon Islands, and can be delivered locally, as required. The next provincial training is scheduled for the second half of 2020.

Marshall Islands:
Technical support provided for the development of the cluster Terms of Reference.

Pacific Regional level:
The Pacific Shelter Cluster continues to raise key advocacy points at the regional level through the Pacific Humanitarian Team’s (PHT) Regional Inter-Cluster Coordinator’s Group (RICCG), and to collaborate with regional clusters and other regional and global fora during preparedness and response.

EMERGENCY SHELTER RESPONSE
At the request of national governments, the Pacific Shelter Cluster supported the coordination of three country-level responses in 2020 through the remote-deployment of the Pacific Shelter Cluster coordination team, reinforced by Global Shelter Cluster surge capacity. Over 77,770 people were reached by shelter cluster partners with emergency shelter and essential household items, and/or technical assistance in terms of safe shelter awareness, trainings, and workshops during the TD03/ Tropical Cyclone Sarai response in Fiji late 2019 - early 2020 (1,058 households, 4,900 people), the Tropical Cyclone Harold response in Vanuatu April - August (12,084 households, 60,500 people), and the Tropical Cyclone Harold response in Fiji (2,379 households, 12,370 people). Remote coordination support was provided to Vanuatu for the duration of the Tropical Cyclone Harold response and into the recovery phase with the development of recovery shelter guidance and input into the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and Vanuatu Recovery Strategy.

GAPS / CHALLENGES
There have been many gaps and challenges that have been caused by the travel restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and some of these include:

- constraints to the scope of the response to the emergency phase as technical staff required to develop recovery shelter programs were not permitted to enter countries that were affected by a disaster. Therefore, local agencies has to strengthen and stretch their human resources.
- postponement and cancellation of several shelter cluster activities.
- significant delays in the transportation and distribution of relief items due to the introduction of regulations around shipping and quarantine of relief goods and disinfection of items.
- hindrance to the provision of coordination support, limiting it to remote support rather than in-country support.

Other gaps and challenges include:

- Lack of dedicated in-country resourcing within Governmental Shelter Cluster Lead Agencies.