# Global Shelter Cluster

**2013 Thematic Priorities**

# Introduction

The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) annual priorities define the key issues that humanitarian shelter agencies and institutions participating in the GSC wish to address collectively over the coming year. They are established at the annual GSC meeting and provide the rationale for the creation or continuation of specific thematic Working Groups (WGs). The WGs are created to ensure the implementation of such GSC priorities and will develop a more detailed definition of their scope and deliverables in 2013. The GSC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) oversees the work plans of the WGs to ensure that the most relevant issues are addressed with the resources available. Accordingly, the final outputs addressing the 2013 thematic priorities will be defined by the work plans of the WGs, SAG’s guidance on these work plans and the resources available to implement them.

In 2012, the GSC focused a significant part of its work on strengthening its definition and organization. It established a more formal management structure; it more clearly defined the scope, structure, and the way it works in key aspects such as undertaking assessments, monitoring and measuring impact. While this effort to more effectively define and organize itself is not yet complete, it has already begun to show results in terms of a more cohesive and coherent cluster. The GSC also strove to clarify how to better engage with others, particularly with the HLP Area of Responsibility of the Protection Cluster, as well as other clusters such as the WASH, CCCM, and Early Recovery, and with donors.

During the planning session of the 2012 GSC meeting, the GSC partners identified and agreed on their thematic priorities for 2013. The key identified areas of focus centered around the need to finalize the work started in 2012 on the internal definition of the cluster and to advance on more effective structuring of the engagement with other key actors. Specifically, the cluster partners expressed the need to establish stronger links with actors at the national level, such as national NGOs, and national and local governments, and a more strategic dialogue with donors, permanent missions in Geneva, and governments in general. The identified priorities are closely interconnected and they feed into each other in a synergetic way. They constitute different components of a coherent action to be undertaken in 2013 to advance the 2013-2017 Global Shelter Cluster Strategy.

This document only includes the GSC identified thematic priorities to be addressed through WGs. It is not exhaustive of all the work that the GSC will undertake in 2013 and in particular the work to be advanced by the SAG and by the GSC Support Team. There are a number of ongoing and recurrent priorities that the GSC undertakes on an annual basis, including but not limited to the development of the GSC surge capacity system, training, management and administrative support to GSC structures and activities, global information management, engagement with the IASC and its subsidiary bodies, global shelter coordination workshop and meeting, updating of shelter coordination teams deployment and management methodologies, resource mobilization, and internal and external communications. These constitute core activities of the GSC that address critical on-going priority issues as identified in the multi-year strategy and are undertaken recurrently on an annual basis. They are therefore outside the scope of this document, which only reflects work to be undertaken for a limited duration to complete a specific thematic task or output identified as priority by the GSC and elaborated in a WG annual workplan.

The GSC thematic priorities for 2013 are therefore as follows:

# Enhanced Shelter Cluster Coherence

**Background and objective**

The objective of enhancing shelter cluster coherence is to increase the predictability of country-level shelter clusters by establishing common methodologies, definitions, tools, roles and responsibilities. This area of priority was already identified last year and a working group was created to address it in 2012. Some of the outputs were completed, such as the scope and the structure of the cluster.

**Outputs**

Activities under this priority focus area will build on and finalize the outputs developed in 2012 including:

* clarification of possible gaps and overlaps, as well as joint outcomes, with other clusters
* minimum requirements and services to be provided by country-level cluster leads
* the relation between country-level cluster leads and funding mechanisms
* guidance on cross-cutting issues.
* Revise the Shelter Cluster Performance Management System in line with the IASC performance management tool.

The group of GSC partners working to advance this priority will continue to support a number of on-going activities that contribute to providing coherence. These comprise:

* the common shelter cluster website
* country-level factsheets
* the network of cluster coordinators
* the development and dissemination of updated guidance for cluster coordinators.

New activities under this priority area include the following:

* development of guidance on the scope of country-level clusters, including when GSC capacity is embedded into national coordination mechanisms
* a common definition of the team approach to cluster coordination and of the different roles within the team
* the feasibility of a common roster for deployment of shelter coordination surge capacity
* more defined linkages between the global cluster and country-level clusters
* development of criteria for handing over cluster coordination after the emergency phase and exiting/deactivating the shelter cluster
* the provision of practical guidance on integrated response.

The working group addressing this priority will also identify and disseminate on-going shelter related activities at the global level, in order to provide a more coherent understanding of the sector and avoid duplication. This will be carried out by mapping shelter sector activities of common interest such as shelter-related meetings, trainings, events and initiatives. A process will be defined for the GSC to promote, endorse or adopt some of these identified shelter sector inter-agency activities that are considered of interest to the whole cluster.

This working group will also produce a publication outlining the state of the humanitarian shelter sector. This publication will serve as a key advocacy tool and will consolidate data from country level shelter clusters and other coordination mechanisms to provide an overview of the sector. It will also capture lessons learned or good practices in shelter cluster coordination.

Finally, the working group addressing this priority will continue the tasks undertaken in 2012 by the Working Group on Predictable Resources in ensuring a common approach to fund-raising for the cluster. The generic proposal that was prepared in 2012 will be finalized and presented to different donors. The group, under the supervision of the SAG, will ensure that the submission to donors is done in a coherent and transparent process, and that appropriate organizations participate even if they are not part of the working group.

# Engagement with local and national actors

**Background and objective**

At the 2012 GSC meeting, it was widely recognized that there is a need to establish stronger links with local and national actors. In a context of increasingly assertive host governments, a more central role for affected states and populations, and better governance structures of local stakeholders, it is critical that the shelter cluster better engages with and builds on the capacities of national and local institutions. After seven years of implementation, there is little evidence that the cluster approach has increased local capacity to coordinate humanitarian assistance.

The aim of this GSC priority area for 2013 is to better involve and build on existing country-level coordination mechanisms and strengthen local coordination capacities in countries where recurrent crises occur.

**Outputs**

Some of the activities under this priority area include:

* the provision of guidance on engagement with local NGOs and national governments
* improved awareness of the cluster approach among local and national shelter actors
* strengthened coordination capacity of national partners
* the promotion of inclusive cluster-based national preparedness and contingency planning.
* Mapping of existing national shelter coordination mechanisms and shelter capacities

# Accountability

**Background and objective**

Throughout 2012 the GSC advanced a number of initiatives that aimed at better articulating the impact of shelter cluster coordination and response activities. In doing so, members of the GSC Working Group (WG) on assessing impact identified the need to expand the scope of the group’s activities to encompass all elements of the humanitarian program cycle, from preparedness, to assessment and planning, to monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

In parallel, the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) project has supported the shelter cluster throughout 2012 in strengthening capacities to integrate accountability to affected populations (AAP) in shelter programming. This has resulted in a number of country level accountability reviews and the development of various tools to support shelter practitioners in designing, implementing, and monitoring shelter programs that are accountable to those they aim to support. It was felt, however, that there are elements of accountability to and among other stakeholders that remain unaddressed. Additional work is needed to better facilitate the integration of AAP in shelter programs.

The GSC 2013 priority focus area on Accountability brings together the work of the 2012 WG on assessing impact and the ECB initiative on AAP into a more integrated and holistic approach to accountable shelter coordination and programming.

**Outputs**

This GSC priority area for 2013 aims at continuing and expanding the achievements of 2012 by addressing the following issues:

1. Strengthening of cluster information systems at country and global levels along the various stages of the program cycle. This would encompass data preparedness, assessments, planning and strategy development, monitoring, reporting, and impact evaluations. Priority outputs would include:
   1. Development and/or strengthening of guidelines and tools on data preparedness, assessments, planning and strategy development, monitoring, reporting and evaluations.
   2. Development of a related global MIS enabling to better capture information and data across the program cycle at the country level and its consolidation at the global level.
   3. Piloting and roll out of the outputs mentioned above at the country level, including the conduct of interagency assessments, enhanced strategy development, reporting, impact evaluations and the consolidation of all information in a dedicated MIS.
2. Facilitate better integration of Accountability to Affected Populations in shelter programs.

The outputs above should support the requirements defined by the IASC in terms of performance and impact monitoring and accountability. The development of guidelines on impact evaluation should be accompanied by advocacy activities with donors on the need for extended timeframes for shelter impact evaluations, which take into consideration the longitudinal impact of humanitarian shelter response.

# Shelter in Recovery

**Background and objective**

The objective of this priority area is to improve the way the cluster engages in shelter early recovery activities. In the last years, the Early Recovery Cluster has decided that all such activities should be streamlined through technical clusters. The Early Recovery Cluster will therefore not be activated at a country level. Instead, a gap-filling cluster, named after the gap it aims to cover, for instance Capacity Building Cluster or Rule of Law Cluster, might be activated depending on needs and context. As a result, GSC partners feel a mechanism should be put in place to ensure that shelter recovery issues are well taken into consideration.

**Outputs**

This priority area will promote, in different ways, the inclusion of shelter recovery issues early on in shelter strategies and responses:

* A register of shelter recovery coordinators will be established and deployment mechanisms will be strengthened in order to ensure that these coordinators can be deployed early on as part of shelter cluster coordination teams.
* Systems will be defined to allow for the shelter recovery coordinator to remain after the emergency phase is over and ensure coordination of the shelter response beyond the immediate relief activities.
* Common shelter recovery tools and methodologies will be identified, agreed upon, and made available to cluster partners for more predictable, consistent and coherent shelter recovery responses.
* A policy note will be developed to provide guidance to shelter actors on effective shelter recovery programming.
* Guidelines will be developed for transferring the leadership of the cluster beyond emergency. These guidelines will at minimum include the two most frequent scenarios: a handover between humanitarian organizations and a handover to national governments. Both situations will address the importance of providing adequate support to national governments to enable a proper transition.
* Advocacy on longer term funding cycles that allow for better programing and implementing of shelter recovery.

# Regulatory barriers to the provision of shelter

**Background and objective**

In 2012, the GSC Housing, Land and Property (HLP) WG developed a matrix outlining the most recurrent HLP and related regulatory issues that are frequently faced at field level during humanitarian responses. It also produced a resource guide on HLP issues, including guidelines, reports, academic research, background documents and discussion papers, international instruments (covenants, protocols, etc), and training.

The HLP WG did not however complete all activities it wanted to undertake and at the 2012 GSC meeting it requested an extension of its mandate for an additional year. It also identified regulatory issues beyond HLP and therefore this priority area will expand its scope to address additional regulatory barriers to the provision of shelter in humanitarian crises.

**Outputs**

Some of the activities to be undertaken in 2013 may include:

* the identification and dissemination of remedial actions to address the most recurrent regulatory issues identified in 2012
* the commission of a scoping study that identifies gaps in knowledge and resources on regulatory barriers, with recommendations on activities to address these gaps
* the conduct of in-country regulatory audits linked with the globalhousingindicators.org
* the development of an advocacy strategy and action plan to further improve collaboration between other global networks and consortia working on HLP and other regulatory issues.
* Delivery of the Shelter and HLP training developed last year
* Quick manual on regulatory barriers to the provision of shelter