The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordination mechanism that supports people affected by natural disasters and internally displaced people in conflicts with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter. The GSC enables better coordination among all shelter actors, including local and national governments, so that the people who need shelter assistance get help faster and receive the right kind of support.

Scope of the Global Shelter Cluster

People who have lost their homes try to meet their shelter needs as quickly as possible. Disaster and conflict-affected households use different types of material, technical, financial and social assistance to ensure access to appropriate shelter. This “sheltering” process goes beyond the immediate provision of basic shelter solutions and is closely linked to longer-term recovery and reconstruction, as well as with other measures to assist individuals, families and communities to re-establish themselves and resume an ordinary life.

The GSC’s scope includes all activities related to achieving the right to adequate housing with a humanitarian focus. This includes:

- emergency and longer term shelter support
- shelter-related non-food-items (NFIs)
- housing construction and reconstruction
- settlement support such as site planning and urban planning
- shelter preparedness and risk reduction.

Global and local coordination support

To support the shelter preparedness, relief and recovery process, the Cluster operates on two levels:

- At the global level, the GSC strengthens system-wide preparedness and increases technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies through improved coordination, and support for country-level shelter clusters.
- At the local level, the GSC supports country-level shelter clusters.

Contact:

For more information on the Global Shelter Cluster, please visit www.sheltercluster.org or follow us on Twitter: @ShelterCluster
You can also contact us by email: info@sheltercluster.org

1 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, the ICRC, the ICRC, IOM, and the main international/NGO consortia.
At the country level, Shelter Coordination Teams ensure a predictable, effective response by mobilizing groups of agencies, non-government organizations, local and national governments, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to respond in a strategic and accountable manner.

The Cluster Approach
As part of the Humanitarian Reform Process, the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed in 2005 to designate global cluster lead organizations as coordinators for all the main sectors of humanitarian response. Organizations that have accepted this responsibility include UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Save the Children.

The Cluster Approach aims to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, and coordination of humanitarian response, following natural disasters or for internally displaced people in emergencies caused by conflict. It seeks to ensure that the humanitarian community becomes more structured, accountable and professional, and can better partner with local authorities and other humanitarian actors. The Cluster Approach is not used in refugee situations, since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to coordinate assistance for refugees.

The Shelter Cluster is one of eleven sectoral clusters. For more information please see www.humanitarianresponse.info

Shelter is more than tents
The various needs of affected households for safety, privacy, protection and livelihood activities must be addressed through approaches that are appropriate to the specific context and the availability of resources. Rather than simply providing pre-determined shelter products or stand-alone solutions such as tents or pre-fabricated shelters, humanitarian actors use a variety of methods to provide support to the affected people. These include the provision of basic shelter materials, technical support, cash-based assistance, awareness-raising and promotion of safe shelter and settlement practices, rental support, or a combination of these and other approaches. Some of these methods involve construction, but many others do not. The GSC supports these different approaches, which build upon and support local solutions.

The Global Shelter Cluster collects, analyses, discusses and shares best practice and lessons learned worldwide, to ensure that men, women and children affected by conflicts and natural disasters get the best possible assistance.

The Global Shelter Cluster recognizes and supports the contributions made by national shelter stakeholders, such as governmental authorities, local organizations and the affected households themselves, to achieve durable shelter and settlement solutions.

The Global Shelter Cluster acknowledges the need to ensure a comprehensive and integrated response and the essential role of shelter to support protection and early recovery. Thus, the Global Shelter Cluster works closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other global clusters to ensure inter-cluster coordination, in particular with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Education, Early Recovery, and Protection.

The Global Shelter Cluster’s Management Structure
The GSC partners meet twice a year to review progress against agreed objectives and define the GSC strategic direction and annual priorities. In order to effectively meet their global responsibilities, the GSC partners have agreed to organize and coordinate their activities through a management approach that allows participation and at the same time streamlines decision making. The GSC management structure has been informed by the experience of country-level shelter clusters since 2006 and the Transformative Agenda.

The structure is as follows:

- Strategic Advisory Group (SAG): a permanent body that works to advance the Cluster’s strategic direction and overall work plan. The SAG is elected by and composed of agencies and institutions that are part of the GSC.

- The Global Cluster Lead Agencies: The GSC is co-chaired by UNHCR and the IFRC. The IFRC convenes the Shelter Cluster in natural disaster situations, while UNHCR leads the Shelter Cluster in conflict situations. The Global Cluster Lead Agencies are responsible for establishing a broad partnership base to advance the Cluster’s aim and objectives. The Lead Agencies call and chair the Global Shelter Cluster Meeting and the SAG. They coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Global Shelter Cluster core functions.

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