 **Global Shelter Cluster**

 ShelterCluster.org

 Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

**Shelter Cluster Assessment Guidelines**

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Acronyms

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|  |  |
| **ACAPS** | The Assessment Capacities Project |
| **CAP** | Consolidated Appeals Process |
| **CODs** | Common Operational Datasets |
| **GIS** | Geographic Information Systems |
| **GSC** | Global Shelter Cluster |
| **IFRC** | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| **IDP** | Internally Displaced Person |
| **IWG** | Impact Working Group |
| **MIRA** | Multi-Sector/Cluster Interagency Rapid Assessment |
| **MIS** | Management Information Systems |
| **PRA** | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| **ToR** | Terms of Reference |

# Objective of this Document

The *Shelter Cluster Assessment Guidelines* are produced by the Global Shelter Cluster’s Assessing Shelter Impact Working Group as part of an overall objective to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the cluster’s activities. By providing guidance on how to conduct assessments, as well as on the analysis and dissemination of assessment findings, the guidelines promote the use of relevant and timely information to facilitate cluster-wide planning, targeting and coordination. The guidelines are a key component of the Global Shelter Cluster’s Toolkit on Information Systems and Information Management.

The guidelines consolidate and build upon existing work by shelter cluster members. They are intended for use as a reference document to help country-level clusters in defining and implementing assessment strategies and methodologies that are most appropriate to their context of operations.

# Background

## Rationale

Lessons learned from recent crises have led to the IASC in December 2011 to adopt the Transformative Agenda 2012, which focuses on three key areas to improve emergency response: better leadership, improved coordination, and greater accountability. To achieve such objectives, there is a need for clusters to develop a more systematic approach to the collection, management, and reporting of key data in orderto inform and improve operational and strategic decision-making and allow for the evaluation of the outputs, outcomes and eventually the impact of emergency responses.

During the 2011 annual meeting in Geneva, Global Shelter Cluster members identified the need to better track and articulate the impact of shelter cluster interventions. It was therefore decided to establish a Working Group dedicated to assessing shelter impact in emergencies. The goal of the Working Group was ‘*to identify and establish a number of tools to enable country-level shelter clusters to determine and monitor sector-level impact, in turn improving the cluster’s planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity*’.

The Shelter Cluster Assessment Guidelines are an output of the working group. They correspond to the required output, as per the working group’s workplan, of ‘*propos*[ing] *a methodology and a resource mobilization plan for systematically conducting a baseline assessment at the outset of a cluster deployment*’. Further outputs of the working group will include guidelines on Indicators and Evaluation.

## Target Audience

The guidelines are targeted towards field practitioners either directly involved in shelter cluster coordination activities or partners and members participating in the shelter cluster mechanism with the shared objective of ensuring an effective and coordinated response. These include shelter cluster leads, IM and Assessment focal points, as well as all shelter cluster members at country and global level.

Given that the information presented in this document should serve as a general guideline for shelter assessments and not a step-by-step prescriptive list, there may be sections that are relevant to some emergency assessments and not others. Users of these guidelines should have some experience in designing and conducting assessments in order to be able to choose the most relevant sections and tools.

## Document Structure

These guidelines consist of three sections:

**Section 1: Theoretical Framework**

This section lays out the framework from which shelter cluster assessments are designed and conducted. It also lays out the benchmarks against which the cluster designs its assessments, ensuring they follow international standards and best practices.

**Section 2: GSC Assessment Life Cycle**

This section provides guidance on the steps that are necessary to design, implement and report on field assessments. Checklists are provided for practical use in the field.

**Section 3: Tool Annexes**

This section provides tool template that are necessary to carry out a shelter cluster assessment in the field.

## List of Tool Annexes

**Annex 1:** Terms of Reference

**Annex 2:** Preparing a Secondary Data Review

**Annex 3:** Site Selection (by IASC phase, location)

**Annex 4:** Sampling Methods

**Annex 5:** Quantitative Data Collection Tools

**Annex 6:** Qualitative Data Collection Tools

**Annex 7:** Guidelines for Designing a Database

**Annex 8:** Secondary Data Review Template

**Annex 9:** Report Template

**Annex 10:** Factsheet Template

**Annex 11:** Assessment Coordinator ToRs

**Annex 12:**  Database and GIS coordinator ToRs

1. Theoretical Framework

## The Four “W’s” of a Shelter Cluster Assessment

#### What:

Shelter assessments provide the humanitarian community with an understanding of the needs, gaps and priorities related to the shelter cluster immediately after a rapid onset emergency or during a protracted emergency. A shelter assessment also establishes a baseline against which shelter humanitarian actors can measure progress and impact. Shelter cluster assessments are conducted by inter-agency teams comprising staff seconded by members of the cluster. They vary in duration and methodology according to the context of implementation.

#### When

Shelter assessments can be carried out after a rapid onset emergency or during a complex emergency. Ideally, assessment findings should be disseminated before key humanitarian milestones (the flash appeal, revised flash appeal, CAP, etc) in order to inform cluster contributions towards them. When relevant, cluster assessments can be integrated into inter-agency assessments such as the MIRA in the early phases of the emergency response.

#### Why

Emergency settings, especially in the early aftermath of sudden-onset disasters, are often characterised by insufficient availability of information. Shelter cluster assessments provide information to enable better planning, coordination and targeting for a shelter sector response immediately after and during an emergency. Cluster coordinators and members can use assessment findings for consolidated funding appeals and for establishing baseline indicators to measure the progress and impact of their response. By using common data and indicators, cluster members are also able to report more effectively and in a way that is useful to the entire cluster.

#### Who

At country level, shelter cluster assessments are coordinated by the Shelter Cluster’s Coordinator and Assessment focal point, in close linkage with the IM and the Database/GIS focal points. As a cluster-led initiative, all shelter cluster assessments are interagency; conducted by and distributed to shelter cluster members. Cluster members are requested to contribute to cluster assessments by seconding staff or other relevant resources.

## Shelter Cluster Assessments

Shelter cluster assessments are facilitated by a dedicated and rapidly deployable team including (depending on need) assessment, database, mapping and remote sensing experts from Geneva and/or by the focal agency in-country with support from Geneva. The assessment process includes four sets of parallel and complementary actions, adapted to a specific context’s needs and circumstances:

1. **Collection of data** through:
	1. **Primary Data:** (a) facilitation of interagency field-level assessments through: technical, social and economic surveys at the individual level; and community based assessments including focus groups using semi-structured techniques; (b) geocoded data collection such as points of interest, photographs, and boundary development; (c) situation-analysis using remote sensing technology;
	2. **Secondary Data:** (d) secondary data gathering and analysis from a range of stakeholders including UN reports, NGO reports, media, and more.
2. **Organization of collected data** in dedicated databases
3. **Processing and analysis of collected data** through reports, briefs, factsheets, publications, static and interactive web maps.
4. **Dissemination of data products** to key aid stakeholders and monitoring of its impact in informing decision-making and coordination.
5. Shelter Cluster’s Assessment Life Cycle

The timeframe for the individual elements of the life cycle depends on the nature of the emergency. For rapid onset emergencies the assessment would be activated in the shortest of delays to ensure that findings are available to inform the (revised) flash appeal process. Attention would be given to ensure that rapid assessments are conducted in coordination with other clusters or (if relevant) as parts of inter-cluster assessments (for example, in cases when MIRA is deployed). For protracted emergencies, the timing would need to relate to the specific information needs of the cluster. As for rapid onset emergencies, the outputs should be timed to coincide with humanitarian milestones such as the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP).

## Assessment Preparation

## *Activation*

Shelter cluster assessments are activated by country clusters or, in case of sudden onset emergency where country cluster is not yet operational, by the GSC. The decision to launch an assessment should be made in a consultative manner with cluster members and (if relevant) with other clusters. The decision should be taken quickly in case of rapid onset emergency. In situations where a MIRA is activated, a rapid shelter cluster assessment could be integrated in the MIRA process.

The organisation of an assessment is primarily the responsibility of an appointed Assessment Coordinator, who reports to the Shleter Cluster Country Coordinator as well as the GSC Assessment focal point. When required, the GSC can deploy an Assessment team from Geneva (including an Assessment cooridnator and a Database and GIS focal point) to manage and facilitate the shelter assessment in-country.

*(Adapted from: IFRC Guidelines for Emergency Assessment, October 2005)*

## *Terms of Reference*

Terms of Reference (ToR) are necessary for any assessment, for several reasons: it’s important to set objectives and activities that are achievable and sensible within given constraints of time and logistics; expected outputs must be practical and useful; different organizations within the cluster may have different perspectives on the assessment, and assessors risk being caught in institutional differences of opinion if these are not reconciled at the stage of completing the ToR. For all these reasons, avoid the temptation to go out to start an assessment before the ToR are agreed; you won’t find time to agree and write a ToR once you’re in the field.

A well-written ToR specifies the scope of assessment, the expected outputs, and the structure and definition of roles of the assessment team, as well as providing or appending summary background information. Shelter assessments often include both quantitative and qualitative methods. It is important to include the planned data collection methodologies in the ToR to provide a clear picture of how the assessment will be conducted. The ToR should also include the timeframe of the assessments, taking humanitarian milestones into consideration.

Depending on who the designated lead for the assessment is, either the country shelter coordinator, the cluster assessment focal point or the deployed global assessment team leader is responsible for preparing the ToR. These should be drafted with as much participation from cluster members as possible, keeping in mind that speed is essential. When relevant, especially in case of sudden-onset emergencies, the ToRs may be agreed by the GSC before the deployment of the assessment team, in consultation with relevant country-level stakeholders.

## *Secondary Data Review*

One of the shelter assessment team’s first tasks is to undertake a detailed review of secondary information. This part of the assessment process is critical to understanding the context and provides more accuracy when sampling and selecting an assessment site. This process requires dedicated human resources from the beginning of the assessment. If the assessment is carried out by a global assessment team, the secondary data review could be completed remotely with regular input from the country cluster; otherwise it would be conducted in-country.

**Case study: Secondary Data Review in Peru**

In May 2012, the shelter cluster agreed on conducting an assessment in Peru, to determine shelter sector needs and priorities in the aftermath of floods. A Secondary Data Review (SDR) was quickly drafted by the GSC before the deployment of the dedicated assessment team based on existing information. The SDR, conducted in consultation with country-level stakeholders, served to inform the design of the assessment, enabling: the targeting of assessment areas, the categorisation of shelter damage in line with government’s definitions, the production of initial mapping products, the integration of existing data to complement the eventual field data-collection. The SDR was widely disseminated to shelter cluster and other stakeholders alongside the final assessment report. It is available for consultation on [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org/).

Below are the possible sources of data as well as the critical information that is usually included in a secondary data review, when available. The possible sources of data include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  Pre-Crisis Information  | In-Crisis Information |
| * National institutions (ministries, research institutions, universities, etc.)
 | * National institutions (ministries, local offices of emergency preparedness, etc.)
 |
| * Large survey (DHS, MICS, censuses, etc.)
 | * Assessment reports from local and international NGOs
 |
| * International development institutions (i.e. World Bank)
 | * Situation reports (OCHA, clusters, government)
 |
| * Sector fact sheets
 | * Humanitarian profiles
 |
| * Common Operational Datasets (CODs)
 | * Geospatial data
 |
| * United Nations as well as local and international NGOs survey reports
 | * Satellite imagery
 |
| * United Nations global data sets or country portals
 | * Social media
 |
| * Geospatial data
 | * Funding appeals
 |
| * Online databases (i.e. EM-DAT, PreventionWeb)
 |  |
| * Previous Flash appeals and Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAPs)
 |
| * WHO country epidemiological profiles
 |
| * ALNAP evaluation reports, After Action reviews
 |
| * DevInfo, World Bank’s world development indicators, Millennium Development Goals
 |

*(Source: MIRA Manual, March 2012)*

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|  CHECKLIST FOR SECONDARY DATA REVIEW |
| **What are the basic features of the crisis?** | * What is the nature of the cause of the emergency?
* What is the geographic extent of the affected area?
* Is this a national crisis or does it affect more than one country?
* To what degree are key structures and services still functioning?
* Are military-civilian relations a feature of the context?
 |
| **What are the security and access considerations?** | * What are the security threats on the roads/rivers/flight paths to reach vulnerable people, as well as at the site of the emergency?
* Has the UN done a risk and threat assessment? What security phase?
* Is access to the affected population restricted and if so how?
* Are non-state actors involved? Are they recognized by the government?
 |
| **How are the situation and needs likely to evolve?** | * If natural disaster, what is the expected evolution over the coming weeks?
* What is the political context and how is it likely to evolve?
 |
| **What is the human scale of emergency and the response required?** | * How many people are affected, where are they and what are the short/ medium term trends expected?
* What are the reported numbers of dead, injured, missing?
 |
| **What factors to consider in focusing on specific vulnerable population groups?** | * If there is a displaced population,
* What are the immediate/expected trends in terms of numbers and any shifts in locations?
* What are the relations with the host community? Are they willing / able to assist the displaced or are there tensions between the two?
* How are marginalized people within the affected population (including among displaced) expected to be affected? How are there needs different from the rest of the affected population?
* How might gender roles put specific groups at risk immediately, and as the emergency evolves.
* How might the disaster affect caring practices for the more vulnerable?
 |
| **What is the potential for national response? (see also below on supplies)** | * How has government been affected – nationally/ locally – and what is its expected capacity to respond?
* Institutional arrangements for coordinating emergency response
* Leadership
* Human resources
* Systems, logistical
* How have national/sub-national private sector, non-governmental and civil society capacities been affected?
 |
| **What is the international response?** | * What agencies/organizations are in the area – what have they been doing and what are they likely to do in response to the situation?
 |
| **What supplies exist in country that can be mobilised for response locally and nationally?** | * What stocks of important materials and equipment are available immediately and in the next three weeks?
* How have suppliers of key materials and equipment been affected and how capable are they of responding to likely demands?
* What means of transport will be available -- trucks, aircraft, animals, boats?
* What is available/accessible locally/nationally and what are partners planning?
 |
| **What are the logistical considerations in terms of effects of the emergency and options for response?** | * How is the affected area best accessed? What are the road conditions to and in the affected area? How will they change over the short and medium terms?
* Are telecommunications systems functioning?
* Are banking and financial systems functioning in the local area? Are they functioning nationally
 |

*(Source: IASC Assessment Guidelines)*

## *Coordination with Cluster Members and Other Stakeholders*

Coordination with cluster members is essential for any shelter cluster assessment. It is important to include as many member agencies as possible in the process to establish cluster ownership and to improve effectiveness through resource and information sharing. Those agencies that are a part of the assessment process will be required to contribute in various ways, including staff, financial resources, logistics and assessment output reviews.

It is important to remember that, while coordination is critical, it should not delay or impede a timely assessment process. The assessment focal point or shelter coordinator should always maintain the lead for the assessment and should find the balance between coordination and speed. It is often the case in rapid onset emergencies that the number of involved agencies might grow as more arrive and scale-up their operations. In the beginning, those cluster members already in-country would spear-head the assessment process, allowing additional agencies to join as they arrive.

Shelter cluster assessments should also be cooridnated with other stakeholders, as relevant to the given context. In particular, as already mentioned, the cluster should consider conducting post-emergency shelter rapid assessments in the framework of teh MIRA, when this is deployed. In addition, coordination with other clusters should be considered. The identification of synergies may lead to the shelter assessment being joined to that of other clusters.

**Case study: Tri-cluster assessment in Somalia**

In June 2012, the Somalia shelter cluster agreed to participate in a tri-cluster assessment (alongside the WASH and the Health cluster) of displaced populations in Mogadishu. The GSC sent a dedicated team to facilitate the tri-cluster assessment. In the target areas, data was collected by inter-agency / inter-cluster teams in line with ToRs and assessment templates / methodologies agreed by the shelter, WASH and health clusters. In addition to sector-specific information, assessment findings were based on data collected on the general socio-economic profile of the target population. Related assessment products are available on [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org/).

## *Site/Target Group Selection*

Selecting priority areas for the assessment mission should be made on the basis of available secondary information and in close coordination with the shelter cluster members. The analysis of imagery derived from remote sensing can also be used when relevant (see below). The assessment focal point or shelter cluster lead is ultimately responsible for choosing the final target sites and groups.

Depending on the scale of the crisis or the mandated assessment scope, it may not be possible to visit all of the affected sites. In this case a sample of sites must be chosen, based on whatever data are available at the time. Choices must be made to include sites that will enable you to understand the situation in the affected area as a whole including but not limited to the worst-affected sites and population groups.

Selecting priority areas for assessment entails some form of sampling. In crisis and unstable contexts, formal sampling is often made impossible by access/mobility issues and/or absence of good population data for a sampling frame. (Internally displaced populations and the deterioration of regular information systems often make population figures very uneven.) At least initially in a crisis, some form of non-probabilistic (i.e: not random) sampling is often necessary. The best choice is often 'purposive sampling' - selection according to specified criteria to represent a certain case, i.e. the extremes or the norm. If more detailed population information is available, random sampling may be possible using the methods outlined in Annex 4.

*(Source: IASC Assessment Guidelines)*

Purposive sampling cannot represent the whole disaster-affected population and its results cannot be generalized beyond the target population. Its purpose is to understand the most pressing issues, concerns and needs.*(Source: MIRA Manual)*

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***When selecting an assessment site, make sure you take these priorities into account*** |
| * **Area with greatest need**
	+ What areas have been reported as the worst affected or to have the greatest need?
	+ What areas are normally the most vulnerable?
* **Area where the shelter cluster can have the greatest impact**
	+ Where do shelter cluster member organizations already have capacity, including pre-established presence, partners, infrastructure and capacity at a global level?
	+ Where is there a need for better coordination and information?
* **Area with current lack of information**
	+ Where are agencies assessing or responding?
	+ What areas are being neglected?
 |

*(Source: CARE Emergency Toolkit, May 2009)*

## *Primary Data Collection Preparation*

#### Assessment Team Selection

For any shelter cluster assessment, there must be a dedicated assessment capacity from within the cluster. A small facilitating team of maximum 2 staff should lead the process and can be identified by the GSC assessment focal point as a surge capacity for the duration of the assessment cycle. The team can comprise: a) an Assessment coordinator, responsible for the overall assessment excercise, including drafting of reports and factsheet, the identification and management of field data collection teams, the relation with stakeholders, etc, and b) a Database/GIS coordinator responsible for data entry, database and data analysis, including production of maps. TORs for the two positions are attached as Annexes 11 and 12.

In addition, each cluster member will be asked to contribute staff or individuals that they have hired in the past to conduct assessments and/or related data entry/analysis. Seconded staff will be integrated in a team under the supervision of the shleter cluster assesment and DB/GIS focal points.

#### Tool& Methodology Design

There are different methods that can be used in ashelter assessment – quantitative and qualitative. This section will outline the different methods of data collection and in what situations they are most useful. In most cases, a mix of tools and methods will be used. Annexes 5 and 6 provide templates of the tools and instructions on how to use them. It is imperative, when designing tools and methodologies, that you also keep in mind the indicators that will be used throughout the assessment. This allows for a common understanding of the data to be collected and also informs future cluster information management using standardized reference points. Refer to the GSC Indicator Guidelines for more information.

**Quantitative research** uses systematic, empirical methods to collect data and process through statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. **Qualitative research**, on the other hand, uses non-numerical data to investigate underlying meanings and relationships.

*(Source: EC-JRC Website)*

***Quantitative Methods***

* **Household Survey**: Formal surveys are time consuming, expensive and require specialized knowledge of survey design to provide valid information. On the other hand, when properly done, surveys provide hard evidence of basic statistics (e.g. malnutrition rates; demography; disease rates, etc.) which are representative of the entire population. Only use a survey if you are confident of your design and sampling methods and the relevance and validity of the data you hope to obtain. The purpose of going to the trouble to design and implement a proper survey is to ensure that the resulting information is representative of the broader population, with ‘mathematically-defined’ levels of certainty. However, only in exceptional cases will it be important to have this kind of mathematical certainty (which require a large and representative population sample), as opposed to the level of confidence one can have in the combined and triangulated results of visual assessment, interviews, and PRA methods.

***Qualitative Methods***

* **Individual or Household Interviews**: A cross-section of people can be interviewed on the same topic to reveal a range of attitudes, opinions and behaviours. Interviewees must beselected to give a good-cross section and avoid sample bias. Answers may bemore personal than in-group interviews and are more likely to reveal conflicts.
* **Key Informant Interviews**: Key informants can be specialists in the topics you are interested in, outsiders within the community (like teachers) who may give a more objective view, or others who are in some way especially knowledgeable. Beware, however, that key informants can reinforce inherent power structures and existing inequalities within communities. Usually you should understand and acknowledge the local power structure before interacting with key informants.
* **Focus Groups**: Focus group discussions are a commonly-used form of semi-structured group interview. Focus groups are small groups (6-12) of people with something in common: special knowledge or interest in certain topics. A facilitator keeps the discussion balanced and on track. For both focus groups and general group interviews and discussions, the interaction of the group members can itself be indicative of what is going on in the community or around a certain topic.
* **Participatory Rural Appraisal**: These are typically highly interactive techniques, which demand time and patience from assessors, but which allow people from the affected community to express their own opinions on their situation and contribute to analysis and decision-making. Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) is a particular form of qualitative research used to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation. The aim is for people to analyse their own situation, rather than to have it analysed by outsiders. What follows is not a prescriptive set of tools to be run through in every assessment, but a menu of options from which to select the most useful ones in a given situation. PRA typically takes a great deal of time to implement, so it may not be appropriate in all situations. Some common PRA tools that might be adopted, if relevant, would be preference ranking, wealth ranking, seasonal calendars, livelihood analysis diagrams, etc.

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| **HOW TO SELECT TOOLS & METHODS** |
| ***Keep these issues in mind when selecting tools and methods to use for your assessment*** |
| **Household Survey** | Use this tool when you already know something about the target population and are able to produce a valid questionnaire. This requires a great deal of time to do correctly, so should not be used in a rapid assessment context immediately after a rapid onset emergency. Household surveys are most useful after rapid assessments when there is more time to appropriately sample from the population and the questionnaire can be piloted before implementation. |
| **Individual or Household Interviews** | This method can be used during a rapid assessment. It does not require a well-constructed questionnaire, but only a list of questions on a specific topic of interest. This method is most useful immediately after a rapid onset emergency to get a general idea of the situation from individual households. |
| **Key Informant Interviews** | Similar to the individual or household interviews, this method requires a list of questions to be asked of key individuals, such as traditional leaders, government officials, NGO staff, etc. This method is most useful in getting higher level information immediately after an emergency about general topics such as numbers of persons affected, areas most affected, responses already underway, etc. |
| **Focus Group Discussions** | Focus Group Discussions are usually more structured than individual or key informant interviews. They require a specific set of questions, a moderator and a recorder. These are most useful when trying to dig deeper into a specific topic to understand the underlying dynamics and forces. Focus groups take time and preparation and should be used after initial rapid assessments have established some understanding of the target population. |
| **Participatory Rural Appraisal** | Participatory Rural Appraisal is a highly empowering process that allows communities themselves to provide opinions on their situation and work together to problem solve. These methods take a great deal of time to implement, however, and are usually only appropriate for detailed assessments. These methods can yield very important information for a shelter reconstruction response, however, as they can allow the community to decide in what ways they want their shelter reconstructed and how it would be equitably set-up, respecting local traditions. |

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***Use these guidelines when interviewing or surveying anyone in the field*** |
| * The interviewing team should consist of between two and four people
* Begin with the traditional greeting and state that the interview team is here to learn.
* Conduct the interview formally and mix the questions with discussion.
* Be open-minded and objective.
* Let each team member finish their line of questioning (do not interrupt).
* Carefully lead up to sensitive questions.
* Assign one note-taker (but rotate).
* Be aware of non-verbal signals, and also take notes from observations of surroundings, economic situation, condition of respondents etc.—this may be necessary to correctly interpret the interview’s results.
* Avoid leading questions and value judgments.
* Avoid questions that can be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no.’
* Open-ended questions are always better than closed questions, because of tendencies to answer ‘yes’ especially if the question is not understood, and because a closed question may miss the point. Hence “Where does this road go?” is better than “Is this the road to Lusaka?”
* Individual interviews should not last longer than 45 minutes.
* Group interviews should last no longer than 2 hours.
* Each interviewer should prepare by having a list of topics and key questions written down in notebook; these should be coordinated within the team in advance.
 |

*(Adapted from: Save the Children-UK Emergency Assessment Toolkit, February 2002)*

#### Logistics

In large-scale assessments, logistics can often be one of the most time-consuming elements of the assessment preparation process. One of the most time-consuming exercises can be recruiting data collectors from the local population that meet the skills criteria needed for the assessment. It is important to begin this process as soon as you have an idea of the scale of the assessment and how many human resources you need to ensure that you get the most appropriate data collectors on your team. Ideally, these would be individuals with some data collection experience, speak the local language(s), are able to participate in the assessment for the entire duration and are able to read and write.

In addition to the assessment ToR already explained above, a fieldwork plan should be put together in order to outline the logistical issues that will need to be followed and considered during the fieldwork portion of the assessment. The fieldwork plan should include the following decisions:

* Number, size and make-up of the assessment teams;
* Allocation of assessment teams to specific locations;
* Proposed itinerary of visits to specific locations;
* Frequency of interim reporting from field teams;
* Time to allow for fieldwork at each location;
* How teams will travel;
* Time to allow for travel; and
* Where teams will eat and sleep.

These planning decisions will be based on what is known about factors such as distances to travel, means of transport available, road conditions, size of locations, damage to infrastructure, security conditions and trends in the emergency situation. During implementation, field team leaders and office-based coordinators should contact each other daily to review progress and decide on any modifications to the plan. Changes may be needed to ensure that the focus of the assessment remains appropriate and teams’ time in the field is used effectively as understanding of the humanitarian situation develops and the operational context (security conditions, access etc.) evolves. This process is facilitated by the use of a situation report (sitrep) that is updated very 1-3 days and sent from the field to the appropriate assessment coordination office.(Source: IASC Assessment Guidelines)

It is likely that there will be very limited equipment and supplies available in the field, or that it will not be possible to know what is available, so field teams should be as self-sufficient as possible. Each team should carry the most necessary items for work, subsistence and accommodation with them. Building a context-specific fieldwork package is important, and can include:

* GPS unit
* Satellite phone (Thuraya or Immarsat)
* B-gan
* Computer (with database and word processing software)
* Computer (with GIS software if relevant)
* Smartphones (if using mobile data collection)

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| **Transport** | * Are transport arrangements confirmed for the entire assessment?
* What back-up transport options are available in case of emergency?
* Do transport options have necessary safety equipment?
 |
| **Communications equipment** | * Has a communications schedule been agreed between the head office and the assessment team?
* Do all team members have adequate communications equipment and training?
* Are back-up communications systems available?
* Are all assessment team members briefed on the process and have phone numbers to call in a crisis?
 |
| **Accommodation and meals** | * Has accommodation been confirmed for team members?
* Has the team been provided with sleeping equipment?
* Have gender-sensitive considerations been made for accommodation?
* Will meals be available for the team in the disaster area? If potentially no, then has the team been given meal provisions?
 |
| **Cash and administration** | * Have team members been provided with an appropriate level of cash?
* Who will manage team expenses and cash handling?
* Have adequate safety considerations been taken into account to ensure that cash handling does not put the team at risk?
 |
| **Visas and travel permissions** | * Do all team members have visas required to enter the country? Are support letters and other forms required?
* Does the team have all necessary travel permissions and documentation to travel to the disaster-affected areas and any restricted areas along the way?
* Do the travel permissions cover any vehicles the team will be using?
 |
| **Insurance** | * Are all team members—including both national and international staff—covered by insurance before entering the emergency zone?
* Does notice have to be given the insurance company before deployment to activate the insurance?
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| **Interpreters** | * Is adequate interpreting capacity available to support assessment team members with interviews and data collection?
* Does the team have access to female interpreters to assist with interviewing women?
* Have interpreters been trained and tested?
 |
| **Team and personal equipment** | * Has the team been provided with appropriate:
* safety equipment including first aid kits, fire extinguishers, maps, telecommunications equipment, identification flags, etc.?
* office equipment including laptops, portable printer, business cards, cashbox, paper, etc.?
* personal equipment and supplies?
* Identification cards, insurance details and important contact details?
 |
| **Security and safety information for the team before their arrival** | * Share the security manual with the team (if existing).
* Give a brief of the security situation on the country and disaster.
* Present a brief on security-related standard operations procedures (SOPs) for the assessment mission.
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*(Source: CARE Emergency Toolkit, May 2009)*

## *Database Design*

The database is a critical element of any assessment, as it is the central location within which all assessment data is located. Creation of the database requires a dedicated staff of a database design expert and individuals with data entry experience to consolidate all collected information. This consolidated information can then be analysed in a series of was by the assessment data analyst to inform the assessment report.

In the longer term, the database can also be used for regular report consolidation and monitoring and evaluation of shelter response projects in addition to regular map updates and reporting. By establishing a database for an assessment, you are establishing the critical element of a information management system. Databases should also be designed, when relevant, to enable easy linkages with relevant mapping software and outputs.

Details on database design will be available in the planned GSC MIS Guidelines.

## ConductingA Field Assessment

## *Primary Data Collection*

#### Training & Piloting

Training is a critical element of any assessment, as it allows for all team members to have a full understanding of the purpose of the assessment, how it will be conducted, the tools that will be used, and what each of their roles will be throughout the assessment timeline. Trainings should be practical and cover every detail of the assessment. For a shelter assessment, the assessment focal point and DB/GIS manager would conduct the training to their respective teams. As shelter cluster assessments consist of staff from member agencies, those managing the assessment would be responsible for an inter-agency team.

When conducting an assessment in a rapid onset emergency, much of the training would be conducted “on-the-job” given the rapid timeframe of the assessment. When there is time, ideally the assessment would be piloted as well. This may not always be possible, depending on the severity of the emergency or context within which you are working, but a pilot can serve both as a further training element as well as a way to fine-tune elements of the assessment tools and methodology.

In a typical shelter assessment, the team usually starts off as small in a limited number of target areas and expands as the methodology becomes clearer and there are greater resources. The use of a gradual (but rapidly evolving) approach can enable to test methodologies and team members and facilitates a rapid scale up thereafter.

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***Provide each team member with a training covering the following topics*** |
| * Terms of reference for the assessment.
* Plan of action, including methodology to be used and time frame.
* Working relationships: responsibility of each team member, reporting lines, etc.
* Logistical arrangements for the assessment (transport, accommodation, etc.).
* Security: existing situation and procedures during the assessment.
 |

#### Data Collection

Data collection should follow the schedule laid out in the ToR as closely as possible. Changes to the schedule are inevitable, but these should be communicated to all team members, Geneva and the country-appropriate coordination offices through the stirep. Data collection can be the most time-consuming and logistically challenging part of any assessment. Even with a detailed ToR and well-executed training, there are bound to be issues that arise when collecting data. This is normal and to be expected. It is important to identify these issues and address them as soon as possible in order to decrease the likelihood of any threat to the quality of the data that you are collecting.Annexes 5 and 6 provide tools for both qualitative and quantitative data collection.

**Remote Sensing**

One method of data collection that does not involve traveling to the field sues satellite imagery to analyse a situation. This is very useful in situations where it might be a security risk to travel to the target location or where it is not possible to travel there.

One location in which the GSC has used remote sensing is in Somalia. Because the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) settlements in Mogadishu are spread throughout the city, are difficult to locate and may be unsafe to travel to, remote sensing allowed GSC assessment experts to analyse the situation before sending an assessment team to field. It also allowed the assessment team to estimate the number of shelters in each location in the city and map them.

This is a tool that can be requested by the country cluster to the GSC assessment focal point that can then facilitate use of remote sensing. Guidance on using for remote sensing will be developed in a GSC Remote Sensing Brief.

When the equipment is available, data can be collected using smartphones or PDAs. These devices significantly decrease the time it takes to collect data and also limits the number of errors made when compared to paper-based tools.

#### Data Verification

It is important to verify all data that is collected. Verification can take place at various phases of the assessment and would ideally be conducted at all phases.

* **Data collection phase**: Data collection team leaders in the field should check all data that is collected each day. The most effective method to do this is for the team leader to collect all completed assessment tools at the end of the day and check for errors or unanswered questions. S/he would then go back to the appropriate individual and explain how it needs to be changed in subsequent data collection and, if necessary, would have the individual return to the location in question and collect the correct data. This verification should take place daily as well as on a randomized basis by someone other than the field data collection leader.
* **Data entry phase**: Data entry staff should be experienced in “cleaning” data. They should be able to critically question each piece of data and verify whether it is a valid response to the question being asked and follows the logic of the tool that was used to collect the data. It is helpful to have a double-cleaning in which data entry staff rotate to check each other’s work.

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***Take the following steps during field data collection in order to ensure the most reliable data*** |
| * Follow the data collection schedule in the ToR as closely as possible, communicate changes to all interested parties with asitrep
* Use only the tools designated in the ToR and provided to all data collectors at the beginning of the assessment
* Provide all completed data collection tools to the shelter cluster assessment team leader at the end of each day for validation and review
* Conduct a debrief at the end of each day with all assessment team members to review issues that need to be addressed and trends/inconsistencies in the data
* If possible, all data in hard copy should be entered into the assessment database at the end of each day to facilitate data cleaning and ensure that two records of the data exists (hard and soft copy).For data collected with the use of mobile technologies, download from the device daily and review in the database.
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## *Primary Data Entry*

Primary data entry entails the entry of all collected data into the database that was designed before the assessment began. Data should be entered regularly in order to enable regular reporting on assessment findings (presented and analysed as fact sheet and/or maps). The data entry process also enables a further degree of data verification. However it is itself often fraught with errors, due to the difficulty in keeping all data organized and entering it correctly and consistently throughout the database. For this reason, it is important to have a very clear data entry protocol and skilled data entry specialists.

The most effective way of ensuring the quality of all data entered is to split up the data entry among a team of data entry specialists. Once all individual complete their assigned portion, then each data entry specialist checks the work of one of the other specialists in order to verify the data entered. A data entry manager should also be assigned in order to oversee the process and to provide a final verification and cleaning of the data at the end of the entire process.

An alternate process uses smartphones or PDAs to collect data, simplifying the data entry process. If using this method, it is important that the data be downloaded from the phones at the end of each day and cleaned by a data entry specialist. In either case, a dedicated data entry team is required to clean and update the data regularly while also providing regular update t assessment team.

At the end of each day, the data entry manager should ensure that the database is backed-up and kept in a confidential location. Backing-up and safeguarding access to the database is important for two reasons: (1) it ensures that the information is not lost, and (2) it retains the confidentiality of the data, which is essential, as assessments often collect potentially personally sensitive information.

**Case study: Data entry in Kyrgyzstan**

Following the violence that erupted in South Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010, the Shelter cluster conducted an interagency assessment to evaluate damage to the approximately 2000 houses that had been affected by the events, as well as collecting socio-economic and vulnerability profiles of their (where relevant former) inhabitants. Assessment findings were used to inform the revised flash appeal.

In order to enable rapid data collection and analysis, a dedicated data entry team was established consisting of 8 data entry officer and two supervisors. Hosted by a cluster member, the data entry team was split between the two main affected areas where the assessment was ongoing. Questionnaires were received on a daily basis and verified and checked by the data entry team, before entering the data into a pre-designed database and (again) cross-verified. The database was designed to enable automatic updates in a dedicated interactive map, which enabled to monitor and visualise the progress of assessment team on a daily basis, as well as producing regular updates and static maps.

Related assessment products are available on [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org/).

## *Primary Data Analysis*

Primary data analysis can often be an element of assessments that is made unnecessarily complicated. No matter what kind of analysis you decide to do (statistical or non-statistical), the main issues that you would investigate in any shelter assessment are: (1) change: how the situation is different now than it was before the crisis, crisis impacts and pre-existing vulnerabilities; (2) group differences: compare the situation of different groups (age, gender, ethnicity); and, (3) gaps: any continued gaps in the information that need to be covered.

Statistical analysis builds on the statistical sampling mentioned above and allows for extrapolation of data to the larger target population you are assessing. It requires skilled analysts and much more time to collect data. This type of analysis is usually not possible in emergency situations given the lack of time and access available to conduct such an in-depth data collection and analysis phase. Non-statistical analysis, however, is used when the assessment calls for purposive sampling. The analyst conducts the same kind of comparisons between groups and locations assessed, but the results cannot be generalized to the larger population. This, however is often not necessary or feasible in an emergency setting.

One of the most essential elements of data analysis is deciding how you will illustrate the data in an image format. It is important to portray the data in a way that is easily and quickly understood by the reader of the assessment report. Charts, graphs, scales, timelines and maps are ways to illustrate data effectively. As already mentioned, data analysis should ideally be disseminated in line with and in order to infomr key humanitarian milestones (flash and revised flash appeals, CAP, etc).

## Post Assessment

## *Assessment Products*

The GSC has developed a set of tools and processes to strengthen the aid community’s decision-making and planning capacity. These are adapted to each context of intervention, at global and country levels. The following are the standard set of assessment products. Depending on the context some or all of these products would be utilized. Templates can be found in Annexes 7-10.

* **Interagency databases**: Collected information is stored in dedicated interagency databases, with high quality encoding to ensure that complex queries and analysis can be undertaken.
* **Production of static maps**: Through the production of static maps, information is displayed in a format that is easy to understand. Where relevant, field-based mapping centres are set up to facilitate access to maps by a wide range of humanitarian actors.
* **Production of interactive (web) maps**: Interactive (web) maps provide aid actors with a tailored access to key information. Open and transparent, the information can be used by all actors to support their programs. Note that the interactive maps should be made available, if possible, in both online and offline versions, to cater for difficult internet connectivity faced in many emergencies.
* **Secondary data reviews**: Secondary data is collected to provide a baseline of key information to inform aid planning and coordination. This includes rapid assessments of background information to help inform context and analysis of data, as well as longer term data collation and presentation for in depth analysis.
* **Reports and briefs**: All collected data is synthesized into comprehensive assessment reports and topic-specific briefs that can be disseminated among the humanitarian community for deeper understanding of the situation on the ground.
* **Remote sensing analyses:** Remote sensing can be both the tool to facilitate the analysis of data as well as an output of data collection. Annotated maps and accompanying reports based on field data and satellite imagery analysis can support the presentation of data as an output of your assessment.

**Case study: Informing the flash appeal in the Philippines**

In January 2012, an Assessment team was deployed in the Philippines in the aftermath of Cyclone WASHI. A interagency rapid assessment was organised and conducted within three weeks, resulting in over 4000 household interviews and over 300 focus group discussion. Assessment findings were analysed and disseminated in teh forms of regular fact sheet and maps, as well as a final report. An interactive web-map was also established to enable tailored visualisations of assessment findings and relevant secondary data. All information products were finalised in time in order to inform the shelter cluster’s contribution to the revised flash appeal. In addition, the assessment team contributed to the MIRA process

Related assessment products are available on [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org/).

Ensure the product you select as outputs to your assessment are relevant and cost-effective. Consider in particular the following questions:

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| **KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER** |
| ***Keep these issues in mind when selecting deliverables for your assessment*** |
| **Does the product ensure the widest dissemination across the different actors and stakeholders? Is it timed appropriately to inform key humanitarian milestones?**  | Ensure that the outputs of the assessment can be disseminated to all actors and stakeholders and that it is understandable to those considered as the target audience. Findings should be disseminated in line with humanitarian milestones, in order to inform them. In the case of inter-agency databases, then ensure that all users have access to the relevant datasets with the necessary access restrictions in order to (a) safeguard sensitive data; and (b) maintain the integrity of the data and avoid compromising the value of the database. Most of all, the type of database software used must maintain a balance of having the technical capability of conducting all the necessary functions or analysis, without excluding users on the basis of its cost and/or complexity. |
| **Does the output fulfil the objectives of the terms of reference? In particular, does it achieve the objectives of GSC.** | Ensure that the outputs produced are in line with the objectives set by the Terms of Reference. Keep in mind that the products should facilitate the achievement of the global objectives both of the particular assessment ToRs as well as of the GSC as a whole.  |
| **Is the production of the output cost-effective? In particular, do the end users of the product produced have the means and capacity to make effective use of the output?**  | This is especially relevant when considering to procure imagery to complement your mapping or conducting remote sensing as part of the tools used to conduct an analysis or verification of the results obtained in the field. Keep in mind also when selecting to use remote sensing as a tool for your assessment. In some cases, the cost of imagery derived from remote sensing and of completing a related analysis may be greater than the added-value it contributes to the end-user – especially if the end user does not have the technical capacity to make full use of the output / product. Refer back to the previous two points above. |
| **Does the product match the future needs of the target audience? Is the aim of the output to provide a time-bound snapshot of a context or is it meant to be a dynamic product that will be used over the course of a humanitarian intervention?** | Static maps and reports are by their nature time-bound whilst interactive maps and databases have the potential to retain relevance over time. Nonetheless, a systematic and coherent information management process must be set up to ensure that the products remain updated and relevant. This may in fact lead to further or updated reports or briefs in the future. In selecting the product for your assessment, ensure also that the information management flow is considered so that the output achieves its objectives in the short and longer term.  |

**Presentations** can both be considered as part of the outputs of a given assessment as well as key components of the assessment process in and of itself. Presentations in particular can be used as a tool to conduct real-time reviews of the work being conducted with key stakeholders that cannot participate as actors in the assessment itself. Moreover, presentations can be used to present preliminary findings to maximise the information communication flows between the assessment and its end-users (i.e. to drum up interest in the assessment and gain input in terms of resources from a larger number of actors and/or donors). In as much as possible, presentations should be accompanied by relevant handouts (factsheets, reports, etc) and complemented by mapping products.

Throughout the assessment operational cycle, consider the use of presentations in order to ensure the assessment is conducted in a manner that is considered transparent and as a tool for generating trust by outside stakeholders that the process and data is both reliable and relevant. Clearly however, the feasibility of conducting presentations across the assessment cycle depends on the timeframe available; in longer assessments it may be worth considering conducting regular presentations on the assessment progress, preliminary data, or key findings whereas in emergency assessments that are conducted within a two week period the scope and need for more than a final presentation does not exist. Consider the target audience in this case also and whether there is a suitable forum in which conducting the presentation would provide a value added to the discussions without compromising the assessment results and/or purpose.

The figures below provide a summary of the key components of presentations as either a tool in the implementation of an assessment or as an output or product of the assessment.

## *Cluster/Inter-cluster Review*

Peer reviews can be conducted at a number of different levels depending on the nature and type of the assessment. Often peer reviews are associated with academic or scholarly works or private sector industries in the review of professional performance (i.e. in the field of medicine). In the humanitarian sector, peer reviews are primarily considered in the process of conducting evaluations of development programmes. There is however, a significant scope for including a peer review in some form in the implementation of assessments.

In a shelter cluster assessment, peer reviews could take the following forms and can be applied at GSC and/or country-cluster level:

1. **Committee** of ‘experts’ set up to validate the assessment process both at the launch of an assessment through the validation of the terms of reference and methodology to be used, and at the completion of an assessment with the validation of the final report;
2. Inclusion of feedback mechanisms through a **cluster** or technical working group relevant to the assessment;
3. As mentioned in the previous section, as a **workshop** with key stakeholders and actors following a presentation of results and key findings at different stages of the assessment (or in rapid assessments upon completion of the assessment but prior to the publication of a final report).

Whilst peer reviews add a layer of legitimacy to the assessment, consider carefully how you choose to set up the process. In particular, if the process is conducted through a committee or cluster feedback system, ensure that the scope for feedback is well defined by both ensuring realistic time limits and providing specific recommendations for feedback in order to ensure that all comments received are comparable and coherent allowing for a quick integration and turn-around to the final product.

Ensuring that the review process actively feeds into the assessment process in a **relevant and timely** manner is potentially the most significant consideration to address when selecting a methodology for the peer review. This is especially important where the context experiences a rapid succession of changes and where a report can quickly loose relevance if there is a delay between the data collection and publication of the results.

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***Consider the following issues in selecting a peer review process for your assessment[[1]](#footnote-1)*** |
| * It must be reliable and representative – it must contribute towards building the legitimacy and accountability of the assessment and its products.
* The feedback produced by the peer review mechanism must be easily digestible, allowing the assessment team to make quick decisions and to integrate the recommendations / comments quickly.
* It must be economical, not only in terms of direct costs (if expert consultants need to be hired) but also in terms of time invested in the review process.
* It must work fast. The peer review system should produce clear-cut decisions relatively quickly. This is especially important if the peer review is structured in the form of contributions through the cluster or through a workshop.
* It must be resistant to suggestions of data manipulation. Data integrity should be ensured at all times.
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## *Dissemination*

The way that shelter cluster products / outputs are disseminated can significantly affect the impact of the assessment. Apart from ensuring that the maps and documents publicised under the shelter cluster banner match the quality standards expected of a shelter cluster product (see mapping guidelines, report templates, etc. in the guidelines), setting up a clear dissemination process also provides an opportunity to enhance the accountability of the assessment towards both the humanitarian community as well as (in as far as possible) the communities in which the assessment was conducted and who contributed their time and information to the assessment. Perhaps most importantly **from the beginning, information must be presented and disseminated in an appropriate and understandable manner according to the needs of each stakeholder group and in line with humanitarian milestones.** Each context and the actors and stakeholders involved therein is unique, as such no one approach may be replicable to another context or situation. Keep in mind therefore that different mediums of dissemination exist which may not be listed here (e.g. radio, multimedia, telecommunications) may be available and indeed relevant to the dissemination of shelter clsuter products.

It is important to keep in mind that products from the shelter cluster will be regularly disseminated throughout the assessment process in the form of fact sheets or reports at critical humanitarian milestones. Below are some key considerations to keep in mind in planning and organising the dissemination of the products of a shelter cluster assessment:

**Accountability**

Wherever feasible, the dissemination process should include the communities targeted by the assessment as an audience of the findings in addition to other stakeholders such as grassroots community organisations and other community based administrative structures. Ensure that the messages and delivery process are tailored according to the target audience.

**Shelter Cluster Standards**

Ensuring that the products disseminated as part of the shelter cluster achieve the standards set as part of this toolkit is an important element of the shelter cluster branding. Any product disseminated under the shelter cluster should thus be approved by the shelter cluster coordinator in-country or the assessment focal point in Geneva prior to its publication. Ensuring that the guidelines annexed to this report are followed in the planning and implementation phases of the assessment cycle will facilitate the validation process.

**Medium of Dissemination**

Beyond emailing and disseminating hard copies of shelter cluster products to the key field actors and stakeholders in the field (either at national or regional level), keep in mind that there may be interest at an international level in the products resulting from the assessment. As such, it is important that the final validated version of any given product is sent to the team in Geneva to be posted on the shelter cluster website (www.sheltercluster.org). It is further recommended that as part of the dissemination of reports or briefs, presentations are organised within relevant forums (clusters, coordination meetings, etc.) that provide an overview of the methodology, results and analysis / recommendations of the assessment. If an in depth peer review was also conducted, then potentially involving a key member of the review panel to participate in the presentation may provide added value to the presentation. Again, for accountability purposes, it is recommended that presentations are made both at the field and national level to ensure that all stakeholders are informed. Drafting a contact list to whom the shelter cluster products will be disseminated in advance will facilitate that no parties are missed. Ensure further, that attendance lists from presentations are kept to keep track of parties that were not previously on your contact list.

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| **CHECKLIST** |
| ***Keep in mind the following in the dissemination process*** |
| Prior to the publication of a given output:* GSC guidelines and templates have been used as per the GSC assessment guidelines.
* All products have been reviewed through peer review and comments / feedback integrated into the final document.
* All products have been validated by the in-country shelter cluster coordinator or assessment focal point in Geneva.
* A dissemination list has been prepared and shared with the relevant country representative[s] of the agencies that directly supported in the preparation of the products.
* Presentations of the findings have been organized at relevant forums, at all levels where relevant (field, national, regional).

Following the publication:* Inform the communications team in Geneva whenever a product is made available or key milestone is reached that made use of the assessment outputs.
* Ensure that printed copies are made available through relevant clusters and/or taskforces.
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1. Based on the following article by Jennings, C: *Quality and Value: The true purpose of a peer review.* Nature, International Weekly Journal of Science 05032 (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)