

Enhancing the Capacity and Quality of the Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Response

Applicant: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on behalf of the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC).

Timeframe: 2 years (October 2020 – September 2022).

Amount requested from USAID/BHA: USD 2 million

Amount from other sources: USD 2.1 million

Program goal: Strengthened shelter and settlements responses that more effectively meet the emergency and transitional humanitarian shelter and settlements needs of the people affected by humanitarian crises.

Result 1: Improved humanitarian shelter and settlements planning and implementation processes, leading to increased emergency and transitional coordination and response capacity.

Result 2: Enhanced humanitarian shelter and settlements practice, through an integrated system of analysis and learning, informing widely shared policy and guidance.

Background and purpose

Co-led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the GSC is a humanitarian coordination platform of shelter and settlement partners. The GSC and country-level shelter clusters work collectively with national response actors to support people affected by natural disasters and internally displaced people affected by conflict with timely, effective and predictable shelter and settlement responses. This important partnership of humanitarian actors has improved the quality of collaboration at country level, resulting in many organizations taking on key shelter and settlement roles in support of the overall response. This illustrates the belief and commitment that working collaboratively results in a more effective response to support the affected populations in meeting their shelter and settlement needs, while also providing an efficient use of human, technical and financial resources.

Country level clusters or cluster-like coordination arrangements are currently active and supported by the GSC in 30 countries (June 2020). In 2019, a total of 14.2 million people received Shelter and Non-Food Items assistance from 639 partners in the 30 countries where there are clusters and cluster-like mechanisms supported by the GSC.

In 2018 the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) adopted its [Strategy 2018-2022](#) based on learning from its [Strategy 2013-2017](#). This program proposal aims to advance those elements of the current GSC Strategy that directly address the need for increased capacity and improved quality of the **emergency and transitional** shelter and settlements coordination and response of humanitarian actors. In particular, the current GSC Strategy builds on the past work of the cluster through the promotion of integrated, settlements-based programming and coordination mechanisms to support and enhance this approach during emergencies and preparedness. The proposal will be implemented during the second half of the current GSC Strategy. It will extend to the period when

the current GSC Strategy will be reviewed, and a new Strategy developed for the period 2023-2027.

The Global Shelter Cluster received a total of 4.6M EUR from DG ECHO's Enhanced Response Capacity in 2013-2014, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018 for the implementation of the first and second phase of the GSC Strategy 2013-2017. This contribution has enabled the cluster to significantly enhance the support provided to country-level clusters.

This structural support enabled the GSC to attain the following **main achievements** during this period:

- The GSC deployed trained and experienced coordinators in less than 72 hours after the activation of newly established clusters and new emergencies in existing clusters.
- The Global Shelter Cluster website (www.sheltercluster.org) has become the key platform to exchange data and share documents and guidance.
- Increased satisfaction from cluster partners at global and country levels.
- Innovative programming was tested on Cash, HLP, and settlements approaches.
- Mainstreaming of core GSC activities and increasing their efficiency.
- Promoting a collaborative approach to resourcing the GSC: the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG¹) has agreed that *"in line with the aspirations of the cluster approach, it is the responsibility of cluster members (including both operational and donor agencies) to identify the resources required to ensure the continuity of core cluster functions at the global level and to deliver on activities within the GSC strategy"* and has identified three main contributory mechanisms to channel resources². The GSC has sought partnerships and resources with government aid agencies (direct funding), NGOs (thematic partnerships such as REACH on assessments or CRS on cash and markets), Red Cross Movement partners and UN agencies (co-funding of surge capacity or in-kind provision of human resources), academic collaborations (accreditation of training, internships, summer practicum), the private sector (World Economic Forum) and consortia of different agencies and institutions interested in particular work streams (through the GSC Working Groups).

In promoting a collaborative approach, the Global Shelter Cluster has increasingly sought to engage humanitarian actors that do not usually participate in international coordination mechanisms, including non-traditional actors, at the global, regional and country levels. This has often resulted in better shelter and settlements programming and a more efficient response. For instance, through its engagement with the GSC, ShelterBox has moved from being a very product-oriented organization, focusing on the distribution of tents irrespective of the needs and operating environment, to planning and implementing a much more process oriented response, that considers and adapts to the needs of the affected population. They have also aligned their item specifications and actively seek engagement and collaboration during response operations. Furthermore, the GSC continues to engage with large international NGOs that have not traditionally participated in the GSC but have large shelter programs, such as TECHO or Samaritan's Purse,

¹ The GSC SAG is a group of agencies and institutions that works to set and advance the GSC strategic direction and advocacy, elected by and composed of organizations from the GSC partnership. It currently includes the GSC co-lead agencies, IFRC and UNHCR, plus ACTED/IMPACT Initiatives, Australian Red Cross, CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, Habitat for Humanity, InterAction, International Organization for Migration, and Norwegian Refugee Council.

² <https://www.sheltercluster.org/global-strategic-advisory-group/documents/resourcing-gsc-final>

resulting in a better coordinated and quality shelter response. More recently, the GSC has established a Working Group on Strengthening and Mainstreaming Diaspora Engagement in Shelter Responses, chaired by IOM with funding from USAID. While this WG is relatively recent and it is still too early to assess its impact, its activities will result in a more effective and comprehensive response by diaspora initiatives and organizations. The GSC is also expanding its engagement with the private sector. At the 2019 GSC Meeting, the President of the Philippines Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), the Philippines' main private sector coordination body for disaster management, was invited as a panelist in the GSC "Ignite" session, challenging traditional humanitarian thinking with insights and ideas from beyond the shelter sector. He also hosted an Open Space session focused on what the private sector can do as an active participant in all phases of the humanitarian program cycle. The GSC also invited a representative of AirBnB to present on their approach to crowdsource emergency shelter from host communities. These private sector sessions have been remarked as being very interesting and useful in the participant feedback and as such the GSC will strive to continue and expand on these initiatives in the coming years.

These efforts at the global level are matched by Shelter Cluster Coordination Teams at the country-level as they reach out to national NGOs and non-traditional actors to explain the role of the cluster and encourage their participation in the humanitarian coordination system. For instance, the cluster coordinator in Venezuela held many bilateral meetings with small local NGOs as the cluster was being set up to explain the humanitarian system and the benefits of working collaboratively through the coordination platform that the cluster provides. In response to the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, the Shelter Cluster ensured that the Strategic Advisory Group included representation of national actors and its meetings were held in Nepali, and that hub level coordination structures were established to engage partners at the local level. The Nepal Shelter Cluster also carried out a study on the role of the private sector and civil society in the response³, establishing the basis for a better coordinated and quality response to future disasters by these actors.

While the GSC has made some progress in engaging non-traditional actors, it still needs to ensure this becomes a concerted and planned effort, developing effective mechanisms for country level clusters to systematically promote and facilitate the involvement of these non-traditional actors, and in particular the private sector, in coordinated shelter and settlements response. As such, the GSC lead agencies, IFRC and UNHCR, will work with the SAG, the Donor Consultation Group (DCG), the GSC Support Team, and country-level cluster coordinators to, building on progress made to date, design policies, guidance and tools that facilitate the participation of non-traditional actors. This will be promoted through the different results and activities listed in this proposal. The GSC surge capacity will provide country level shelter cluster teams with tools and guidance to include non-traditional actors in country-level clusters. The localization, capacity building, preparedness and outreach initiatives foreseen in this proposal will be vehicles for the engagement of a wide diversity of humanitarian stakeholders. The learning activities suggested in this proposal will include lessons on the engagement of new and non-traditional actors, which in turn will inform the development of advocacy, policy and guidance to further promote the participation of the private sector, civil society organizations, local authorities, national governments, local and national NGOs, academia and all

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https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/sc_nepal_private_sector_coordination_pilot_study_report_final.pdf

those interested to contribute to the humanitarian shelter and settlements response. The further development and dissemination of the GSC website and mobile app will make the work and activities of the GSC more accessible to these increasingly active actors and facilitate easier communication and understanding of our shared goals and purpose.

The GSC has learnt a number of lessons through its efforts to engage actors that do not usually participate in humanitarian coordination mechanisms:

- Effective integration calls for a paradigm shift that considers these actors as critical and central stakeholders, rather than peripheral: **the GSC will continue to promote and advocate for the need to reach out and engage with non-traditional actors. Building on the research carried out in Nepal, it will continue to build evidence that demonstrates the central role of these actors in humanitarian response. Country level shelter cluster meetings will be held and documents developed in the local language as much as possible (see for example the case of Indonesia)**
- A continued and sustained engagement during preparedness and contingency planning processes is more effective in achieving durable collaboration: **country-level shelter clusters with a sustained presence in highly vulnerable countries will capitalize on preparedness and contingency planning activities to reach out to and engage with non-traditional actors, so that when a humanitarian crisis arises or escalates, there are already existing linkages, buy-in and understanding of respective roles and added values as well as agreed upon coordination mechanisms.**
- Training and capacity building opportunities are useful vehicles to kickstart meaningful engagement and cooperation: **localization and capacity building initiatives will also target non-traditional actors, providing opportunities to those who have not been able to engage in the past to better understand the humanitarian coordination system and its reporting and information management tools and the mutual added value working in coordination can bring to the overall response.**
- The 2006 Global Humanitarian Platform Principles of Partnership (equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity) continue to offer a valid framework within which collaboration with these actors can be strengthened: **in developing the mechanisms that will promote the involvement of non-traditional actors, the GSC will consider the Principles of Partnership and how they apply to cluster coordination, and integrate them into the relevant policy, guidance and tools.**
- There are different levels of collaboration along a spectrum, and we must adapt our understanding of the right level of collaboration to the different levels of operation we are referring to: **there is a spectrum within which coordination is defined, from independence, to communication, to alignment, to collaboration, to merger. The GSC will seek to understand what the optimum level of coordination is for the different levels of operation for these non-traditional actors. For instance, private sector and civil society response is seen as inherently spontaneous action with deep meaning for responders. Overtly bureaucratized coordination could inhibit the organic nature of their response. Effective coordination with these actors must consider that humanitarian action is not the primary mandate of these organizations and therefore incentives to coordinate differ from those of traditional actors.**

- Greater effort has to be put in place to increase collaboration with development actors, while preserving the humanitarian space: **there are still significant gaps in the transition between humanitarian and development action. While humanitarian funding usually falls well behind financial requirements to meet actual needs, development processes take a long time to materialize in any form of assistance to the affected population. This often results in increasing pressure on humanitarian actors to fill that gap by extending their action beyond their humanitarian mandate into recovery and reconstruction activities. The GSC will foster a closer dialogue with host governments, the private sector, and development actors to better design, integrate and implement a seamless continuum of humanitarian, recovery, and development action.**

Nevertheless, some important challenges were also encountered in the same period, which can be summarized as:

- In the evaluation of the previous GSC Strategy, country-level support and surge capacity was rated a high priority in being able to deliver the responsibilities of the GSC. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback from field Cluster Coordinators for the support they receive from the Global Focal Points (GFPs), Roving and Regional Focal Points (RFPs) and Deputy Cluster Coordinators. The GFPs and RFPs are also important mechanisms for consistency and quality control of clusters at country level, as well as for **capacity building, training and coaching** of shelter cluster teams. Their functions in support of regional preparedness, networking and relationships with government and partners, are most effective when there is continuity in the roles. The GSC continues to rely significantly on surge capacity for immediate, predictable response and gap filling, as well as capacity building and enhancement (e.g. for preparedness for response, contingency planning, mentoring and on-the-job training, etc.); guaranteeing its maintenance and continued support is therefore critical for the sector.
- The GSC has identified that more roles are requested by country-level clusters in addition to cluster coordinators. Surge capacity should be available for other **more technical roles** such as information management, market-based approaches **for shelter and settlements programming**, NFI responses, specialist construction and spatial advice, housing, land, and property rights, environment (for instance, asbestos), energy, gender and inclusion, gender-based violence, protection, urban response, and the promotion of the settlements approach, *inter alia*.
- Fundraising for shelter operations and coordination has been consistently highlighted as the number one problem by those filling the GSC anonymous pre-meeting survey. OCHA's Financial Tracking System indicates that the humanitarian shelter and settlements sector is among the most underfunded sectors worldwide. **Advocacy and building an evidence base** on the foundational and cross-sectoral impact of shelter and settlements interventions is key. Recent initiatives such as the [State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements](#) report and InterAction's [More Than Four Walls and a Roof](#) have aimed to increase the profile and understanding of the humanitarian shelter and settlements sector, through rigorous research underpinning advocacy messages. Additional work is being carried out by the Center for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) of Oxford Brookes University in collaboration with CARE International UK, CRATerre, Habitat for Humanity and CRS on the [broader impacts of shelter](#) assistance. With regards to the sector's coverage, the annual [GSC Achievements Report](#) includes information on funding received against funding required for the humanitarian shelter and settlements sector, as well as number of people reached against target. A more detailed funding analysis and

comparison with other sectors is provided in *Part 3 of the State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements* report. More needs to be done, however, to strengthen the evidence base supporting the GSC advocacy efforts and to better understand the extent and quality of coverage rates.

- Given the challenge of establishing consistent, long-term and strategic funding partnerships for the GSC, financial support has tended to be piecemeal and project-based, often reflecting donor programmatic or thematic interests. Funding has often concentrated on individual and stand-alone initiatives rather than focusing on a **more strategic level, by providing structural unearmarked support to strengthen the overall cluster**. This proposal provides some level of funding certainty for the next two years for a wider scope of activities, which will help address this piecemeal approach and empower the GSC to leverage other funding opportunities with a diversity of partners. As mentioned above, the timeframe of the proposal will also take the GSC and its partners to the second half of its current strategy, where the need to take stock and look forward to remaining relevant will be high. Securing the funding base to perform and improve its core activities in this key period will allow the GSC to increase its capacity and focus on facilitating the dialogue for a cohesive, inclusive and effective strategy for the future of the humanitarian shelter and settlements coordination.

Cluster leadership and effectiveness is strengthened when sustained investment is provided for normative and substantive work, rather than lower-level and multiple ad-hoc commitments of varying amounts and durations, which lead to piecemeal and unsustainable approaches that are hard to scale. A sustained investment in the overall GSC mandate and strategy will allow greater flexibility and relevance in fulfilling the GSC substantial responsibilities. It will also allow the GSC to focus on strategic issues, rather than on fund-raising or on meeting relatively small project-specific demands reflecting individual donor interests, therefore creating the space for an adaptive strategic framework within which existing resources can be allocated. The GSC aims to reinvigorate and engage the Donor Consultation Group (DCG) and promote a concerted effort towards multi-year and flexible funding and reduced earmarking of donor contributions, as well as an enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development actors, as reflected in the Grand Bargain commitments. The GSC leadership aims to focus on the strategic issues that are of interest to the wide diversity of its stakeholders, facilitating consensual decision making by the GSC constituency, independent of grants and therefore reflecting a generally agreed and cohesive direction for shelter and settlements coordination and programming.

- While demand on the GSC for **in-country workshops, training, preparedness and contingency planning** in support of governments and national response actors has increased, current funding levels restrict the amount of time and investment that is possible for these areas of work that are key to **localization**. The experience of COVID-19 has also reinforced the need to increase online capacity building activities and approaches.
- Evaluations of cluster performance have pointed to the need for adjustments, in particular through connections with other clusters, **emphasizing inter-sectoral issues, and the promotion of settlements approaches**. This is increasingly urgent work for the GSC in addition to the fundamental role of promoting good shelter practice and ensuring that coordination mechanisms are flexible and adaptable enough to respond to changes in the humanitarian landscape, modalities of intervention and technological developments. This is evidenced by, for example, the rise of marked-based approaches such as cash-based

assistance in many contexts as a modality that has inevitable consequences for cross-sectoral programming and coordination.

- **The demands on the GSC for crisis response have increased in both number and complexity.** The World Disasters Report shows that more disasters are occurring with greater intensity while data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) show that there are more displaced people globally – including refugees – that at any stage since World War Two. Emergencies are becoming more complex, the number and diversity of stakeholders and response actors have proliferated – for example, more than 350 shelter agencies responded in the Nepal earthquake and sought coordination support from the cluster. Responses are increasingly urban and this requires changes to established methods of coordination and partnership. In the context of increased complexity, there is also greater demand for a well-functioning and adaptable GSC.
- **The use of market-based programming, including cash** in humanitarian responses has escalated and will continue to do so. The sector has progressively evolved to adapt to this and will continue adapting. The GSC proactively advocates to ensure the expansion of cash transfer and market-based programming results in quality shelter outcomes. It has done so in coordination with other clusters, and more closely with the Global WASH cluster, with which it has issued a [joint advocacy paper](#)⁴. The GSC views these implementation modalities as instruments for the delivery of humanitarian shelter and settlements support, rather than as ends in themselves. The focus of the GSC is to ensure those affected by humanitarian crises have access to habitable covered space. Whether this is achieved through the distribution of household items, cash transfer, vouchers, market incentives, training, capacity building, technical assistance, communication and advocacy or, as is more frequently the case, a combination of some or all of those modalities, is secondary to the purpose of the intervention and only matters in relation to how effectively and efficiently humanitarian agencies can meet the shelter and settlements needs of the affected people.

Typically shelter programs are not focused solely on the transfer of assets or commodities but are composed of multiple components designed to achieve quality shelter outcomes. Good shelter programming relies on balancing the provision of shelter commodities such as plastic sheeting, tools or materials with services such as trained labor or secure rental agreements, accompanied by the appropriate type of technical guidance. Either can be provided through in-kind or cash and markets-based modalities, but it is the technical guidance and support element of project designs and outcome monitoring that adds value and allows the achievement of quality shelter outcomes, ensuring physical safety, preventing the use of hazardous materials, and mitigating protection concerns such as Gender-Based Violence, privacy and security.

As such, the GSC acknowledges that the provision of cash or cash alone may not always be the most suitable response option to meet needs appropriately. This is equally true of in-kind assistance, and experience has shown that much greater success is achieved when support has been provided through combining finance, in-kind materials and crucially, carefully designed technical assistance. It is ultimately informed and technically driven response analyses that should define the best combination of modalities that will meet the prevailing humanitarian shelter and settlements needs.

⁴ https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/wash_shelter_cash_advocacy_paper_-_final_version.pdf

As a result of this understanding, the GSC has in the past few years placed greater emphasis in improving the quality of shelter response and the technical assistance element of shelter programming. The Promoting Safer Building and Construction Standards Working Groups have developed tools to better support agencies and the affected population in achieving quality shelter outcomes. The Promoting Safer Building WG developed a protocol for the rigorous and evidence-based identification, review and selection of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, which has been piloted and used by national cluster technical working groups in Mozambique and Indonesia. With the support of BHA through IOM, this WG is developing a library of IEC materials hosted in the GSC website for easy access to and dissemination of technical knowledge tailored to the diverse target audience of country-level shelter clusters. The Construction Standards WG has developed a harmonized set of standards for construction processes that can be adopted in any context, and that will inform a consistent position on construction due diligence that agencies can commit to. Other GSC WGs have chosen to focus on promoting protection outcomes, such as the Gender-Based Violence and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Shelter Programming WGs. This shows the commitment of the GSC to focus on the purpose of humanitarian shelter and settlements action, rather than the means through which we achieve those outcomes.

This is not to say that there is not an urgent need to develop shelter and settlements specific tools, guidance, skills, capacity, experience and evidence base to quickly and efficiently map, assess and analyze the varied sectoral markets that contribute to adequate shelter and settlements. The GSC should provide more guidance and capacity to the country-level shelter clusters and to inter-cluster conversations on the use of market-based approaches to shelter assistance, including cash. Additional tools are required to undertake market assessments for shelter and respond to shelter needs using appropriate market-based interventions. More work still needs to be done particularly to address the lack of overall expertise amongst shelter practitioners to respond with mainstreamed tools, approaches and data gathering methods and analytical capacity. The GSC will seek links with the Markets in Crisis community of practice, also supported by BHA to develop and share tools, training and guidance, promoting market-sensitive crisis response and preparedness.

Assisting affected families and communities in their pathway to restore a certain degree of domestic and community normalcy is at the core of all humanitarian action and helping to re-establish minimal habitable covered living space is a foundation for domestic living. There are a wide variety of assistance options that humanitarian actors commonly use, including cash assistance and market-based programming, distribution of NFIs, and socio-technical assistance, to contribute to meet the humanitarian shelter and settlements needs of the affected population. However, the sector, and the humanitarian world at large, has traditionally had challenges in understanding the effectiveness of those interventions and, indeed, whether shelters are “more habitable” and how domestic life has improved (or not). Other additional complications in providing a view into the outcomes of humanitarian programming include balancing the time and costs of conducting the social research required to gather that evidence versus using that cost for implementation and operations and the somewhat unique challenges that the shelter sector has with the view that relief activities should contribute to longer term development planning. There are indeed remaining challenges in defining the results that are expected for humanitarian sheltering responses.

The GSC has advocated that a partial solution lies in classifying the core components of what the contributors are to “habitable living space” and provide field-level practitioners sector-wide tools for a common approach to this analysis. The components to consider will necessarily need to address both the technical elements to ensure that the dwelling enclosure meets certain locally defined performance standards, but also offer an approach to the sociological and anthropological description of how families live both inside and outside, and are able to perform their core domestic functions as a metric for outcome-level analysis. The GSC is currently developing this analytical framework for systematizing the data collection and analysis of these types of metrics to describe the current situation of sheltering quality that is aiming for more broad adoption among its partners.

In defining “minimally habitable covered living space”, the GSC is exploring two fundamental components of 1) the technical standards of enclosure, and 2) the abilities for families to perform core domestic activities (typically sleeping, cooking, eating, etc.). Locally defined minimum performance standards for each of the sub-elements for each component can be derived and observations collected through a combination of statistical research or, when funding for research is unavailable, leveraging the operational capacities of field-based partner agencies to gather observations in parallel with their operational activities.

Piloting, adapting and mainstreaming new innovations is challenging, but the GSC has well-established processes and can utilize the Working Groups, the SAGs, and good relationships with other clusters and donor partners that can influence change and improved ways of responding to humanitarian crises.

- A further challenge lies around the **extension of humanitarian action into the post-emergency phase**. Increasing duration of cluster activities and the risk that clusters can become embroiled in longer-term reconstruction and development processes are of concern. It is acknowledged that most shelter and settlements actors have a dual-humanitarian and development mandate and will continue to engage in relief, recovery and reconstruction processes as they see fit. The cluster provides coordination support during the emergency, adopting humanitarian strategies from the outset that will assist transition to safe sheltering and durable solutions, while managing expectations of longer-term, developmental focused activities that should be coordinated and funded by governments and development partners. This proposal seeks to support the GSC core focus and humanitarian mandate of coordinating the humanitarian shelter and settlements response. It is acknowledged, however, that, in the case of disaster, household recovery processes start immediately. As such, the cluster relief strategy and technical guidance must seek to facilitate, promote and improve recovery efforts, recognizing that relief can negatively impact recovery when such considerations are not made.

In doing so, the GSC will continue to protect the humanitarian space and advocate on behalf of those whose humanitarian needs remain unmet. In order to prevent unreasonable expectations from host governments and other stakeholders for shelter clusters to support recovery, reconstruction and development demands that fall well outside the humanitarian mandate, the GSC and country-level shelter clusters will proactively communicate and explain the core humanitarian purpose of the clusters, the limits of their mandate, and the options available to take forward the coordination and implementation of non-humanitarian action. Shelter cluster

coordinators will engage with development actors and programs (see further below) from the beginning of the response, and ideally before a humanitarian crisis arises or escalates, in implementing preparedness activities. They will engage with host governments, development actors and other relevant stakeholders in defining the key role of humanitarian response coordination in relationship to subsequent phases and requirements. They will also develop exit strategies for the cluster from the onset of the response, in consultation with cluster partners and government authorities. Shelter clusters cannot do this alone, and will engage with donors, OCHA, GCCG, Humanitarian Country Teams, ICG and other clusters to present a commonly agreed position on the boundaries between humanitarian action and development programs, and how humanitarian and development actors can work together in bridging that divide. Shelter clusters will also promote humanitarian shelter response strategies that do not undermine nor delay recovery and reconstruction efforts, but rather facilitate and accelerate the affected population own paths towards recovery and durable solutions.

- The GSC has a role to play when it comes to **establishing, encouraging and supporting links to development actors and programs**. Development actors such as the World Bank, JICA, European Union, as well as NGOs, Private Sector entities, and UN Agencies with longer-term development mandates increasingly interact with the Shelter Cluster, especially at country-level, during emergencies. While the Shelter Cluster remains primarily a temporary humanitarian coordination structure, it tries to ensure good collaboration, information sharing (for example the Shelter Cluster often contributes to government/World Bank PDNA processes), and strategic discussions to facilitate continuity between relief and recovery processes.

The GSC will continue to broker a closer relationship and dialogue with development actors, to ensure a better collaboration between humanitarian and development processes. This includes enhancing the dialogue with host governments which at times push for a rapid end of humanitarian assistance in favor of reconstruction, while humanitarian needs are still present. The GSC has a responsibility to advocate for humanitarian space where humanitarian needs remain, while facilitating transition to recovery and reconstruction processes where the right conditions are in place. The GSC will engage with development actors early on in the response process as well as during preparedness, working collaboratively across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantage. This will be done by encouraging participation of development actors in a revitalized GSC Donor Consultation Group, inviting participation in the GSC WGs to agencies with longer-term development mandates and engaging in joint initiatives to significantly increase prevention, mitigation and preparedness as well as multi-hazard risk and vulnerability analysis.

In better engaging with development actors, the GSC will proactively define the nexus between humanitarian and development processes, at the same time helping create the boundaries between them.

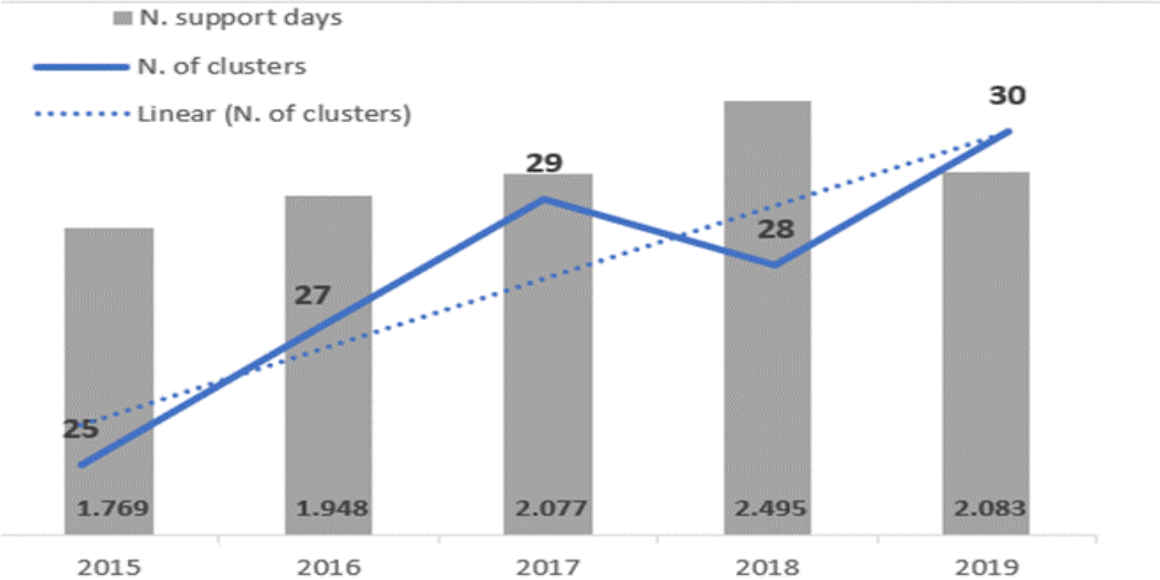
The Global Shelter Cluster also received support from BHA during this period for a number of its working groups (Shelter Projects, the State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements report, Settlement Approaches in Urban Areas and Diaspora working groups). Additional contributions were made by BHA to the overall sector particularly through InterAction. These contributions have been very valuable to advance the understanding of the sector, enable research and knowledge exchange amongst sector specialists and address evidence gaps.

It is the first time that the GSC is approaching BHA for structural support at the strategic level to allow the GSC to build on the successes and learnings of the past years and adapt itself to the changing humanitarian coordination environment, while maintaining the quality of the coordination services it offers at the country level.

The years 2020 and 2021 are a critical period for the GSC as the Strategy 2018-2022 passes its mid-term. The reduction in funding in 2019 has reduced the momentum reached in previous years and it is hampering the implementation of the strategy, with the main impact being felt in the support team and surge capacity (strategic area 1) and investing in increasing (local) capacity (strategic area 4). Without an increase in funding, it will be difficult to achieve all the ambitions of the strategy and improve the services of the cluster.

The following graph compares the number of days that the members of the [GSC Support Team](#)⁵ could dedicate to support country-level clusters versus the number of clusters activated across the last five years. The graph shows how the GSC has managed to build its capacity over time from 1,769 days of support provided in 2015 to 2,495 in 2018. The number of clusters has been increasing from 25 in 2015 to 28 in 2018. When the ECHO funding ended in 2018 the GSC was not able to maintain the same level of support to country-level clusters and there was a drop in the number of support days provided. However, the number of clusters has continued to increase to 30 currently active.

N. support days vs N. of clusters activated



⁵ The GSC Support Team is a dedicated team seconded by the cluster lead agencies and partners to provide technical, coordination, information management, assessment, and HLP, *inter alia*, support to country level clusters, through deployments of surge capacity and remote support, preparedness and contingency planning activities and capacity building; it also supports the activities of the GSC through the Working Groups and SAG as well as interaction with other clusters and organizations. It consists of the GSC Coordinators, GSC Deputy Coordinators, Global Focal Points, Roving Coordinators and Information Managers and Regional Focal Points.

The GSC Support Team currently consists of 16 individuals (7 women and 9 men) working full or part time to advance the GSC Strategy. The team includes nationals from 12 different countries, speaking at least 10 languages. The composition of the global cluster continues to change and the GSC aims to ensure wide representation and diversity in cluster positions. This starts with support to county-clusters, decentralized training, outreach and capacity development at the regional and country levels, and investment in regional focal points. Recently, the shelter cluster has invested in positions in Asia, Africa and the Americas with team members whose personal backgrounds are also drawn from countries in those regions. The GSC has also supported the Regional Shelter Fora in Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific and the Middle-East, where shelter and settlements projects, experience, tools and initiatives are shared amongst practitioners. The GSC has often organized regional shelter cluster workshops on the back of these inter-agency regional events. Additionally, through experience, training, capacity development, exposure, mentoring and remote support a newer generation of shelter specialists and cluster coordinators is emerging in countries such as Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Colombia and Kenya, amongst others. As these colleagues become gradually exposed to a variety of contexts and grow in seniority, they will be very well placed to provide support regionally and globally to other coordination teams. The global team seeks to support professional development and invest in career progression for this next generation of coordinators emerging from the field. At times, the nationality of those in the GSC Support Team is defined by the agency contributing the human resource, sometimes in-kind. The GSC remains committed to implement the human resource diversity policies of the agencies contributing personnel and will work with the Donor Consultation Group and donor government representatives to move towards unearmarked funding, which allows for an open recruitment process in filling new positions.

Program goal, results and activities

Based on the challenges and issues outlined above, the following section details how the GSC will address those issues through the implementation of this proposal. The main goal is to strengthen humanitarian shelter and settlements responses by achieving two overall results, the first focusing on improved planning and implementation and the second focusing on analysis and learning, leading to enhanced policy, guidance and practice. The priority issues that the GSC aims to address through this proposal are as follows:

- The provision of high quality human resource capacity to support country-level clusters: the vast majority of the GSC work relies on the availability of a core team of highly trained and experienced cluster coordination experts that provide immediate, predictable and sustained support, technical advice, capacity building, training and coaching, analysis and learning to country-level clusters. Maintaining a reliable, stable and sustained expert team that can remain updated on the evolving thinking and practice of humanitarian action and bring and integrate new tools and approaches into humanitarian shelter and settlements response is the foundation of all other activities. It is this surge capacity for preparedness and response of the GSC Support Team that constitutes the main tool to mainstream the GSC strategic priorities in country-level shelter and settlements response, including the promotion of the settlements approach, localization (by identifying, training, coaching and mentoring local staff for instance), inter-cluster coordination, better linkages with non-traditional and development actors, the development of country-level shelter and settlements response strategies that ensure a minimally habitable covered living space, and the capturing and sharing of lessons learnt and integration into training and capacity building initiatives to improve practice. Without this core team in place, none of the other issues and challenges can be effectively addressed.

- **Localization, capacity building, preparedness:** the push for localization brought about by the Grand Bargain, which the GSC fully supports in its current Strategy, comes hand in hand with increased capacity building at the regional and national level. This proposal will support localization, capacity building and preparedness initiatives with a view to increase the capacity of the GSC to sustain the engagement of humanitarian and non-traditional actors in shelter cluster activities throughout the year, improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and scale-up the implementation of the GSC strategic priorities.
- **Sharing practice and facilitating learning:** by analyzing and learning from past and current experience, the practice of humanitarian shelter and settlements can improve. This proposal supports the collation and sharing of evidence to inform humanitarian response planning and implementation, through the conduct of detailed shelter and settlements assessments, monitoring and evaluation exercises, regional exchange, research, and other learning initiatives such as practitioners workshops and Shelter Projects.
- **Development of advocacy, policy, guidance and tools:** building on the experience and learning by the GSC Support Team, country-level cluster coordination team members and shelter and settlements agencies, this proposal supports the activities of the GSC governance and management bodies to develop the required policy, guidance and tools that can help country-level clusters and practitioners implement effective shelter and settlements response programs. By supporting the activities of the GSC SAG, WGs, and DCG, this proposal helps advance the areas of focus that the GSC constituency has prioritized, such as settlements approaches in urban areas, disability inclusion, diaspora engagement, construction standards, promoting safer building, or cash and NFIs. It will also support the GSC in taking forward key advocacy concerns through the Global Cluster Coordination Group and other platforms where the GSC can contribute to global policy.

Program goal: Strengthened shelter and settlements responses that more effectively meet the emergency and transitional humanitarian shelter and settlements needs of the people affected by humanitarian crises.

Result 1: Improved shelter and settlements planning and implementation processes lead to increased emergency and transitional coordination and response capacity.

The coordination services provided by the global and country-level shelter clusters will contribute to a more localized, predictable, effective and timely response through the following activities:

1.1. Surge capacity for preparedness and response (for coordination, information management, technical, HLP, gender and diversity inclusion, assessment and analysis, cash and markets)

The basis for effective and timely humanitarian response is the capacity and ability to avail senior humanitarian shelter and settlements specialists who are able to deploy immediately to sectoral leadership roles in response to crises. These experts -Global Focal Points (GFPs), Regional Focal Points, Roving Coordinators, Roving Information Management Officers and other roving roles) enable high-level technical and strategic support to government and response agencies and can deploy at short notice (within 72 hours of official cluster activation or request to deploy) and available for immediate support, ensuring predictable, empowered and effective leadership in humanitarian response. These positions enable rapid response and provide ongoing advice, support,

strategic guidance and mentoring to country-level clusters, but are not intended as long term in-country roles. The average length of deployment for response ranges from 1 to 3 months. The maximum of length of deployment of GFPs and Regional Focal Points is 1 month, while the maximum length for Roving Coordinators and Information Managers is up to 6 months, although it rarely exceeds 3 months. These positions are replaced through the usual agency recruitment processes and they continue to support the new incoming team remotely. The roles cover core elements of shelter and settlements response, including coordination of a wide range of shelter and settlements actors, information management, and technical coordination, as well as specialized shelter and settlements related areas such as Housing, Land and Property (HLP), assessments and analysis and market-based programming, *inter alia*. These human resources are available to support all members of the cluster and global and national levels and are the basis for GSC investment in localization through the capacity building of national responders. The surge team members support training, capacity development, preparedness, contingency planning, and in-country and remote support to ongoing responses. They are key to the GSC's investment in institutional learning, coordination, and sectoral development through investing in, researching, and promoting wider settlements approaches to enhance effective shelter programming. They ensure that knowledge and practice of the wider sector reflects the latest thinking and experience in humanitarian response. They utilize mixed modes of capacity building and coaching, training and outreach using technology as appropriate.

According to available expertise and existing local capacities, the surge capacity will provide in-country and remote support to country-level clusters, with a focus on preparedness and the early and transition stages of the response (typically within the first six months) in specialized areas such as coordination, information management, market-based programming including cash for shelter, urban response, settlement planning, gender and diversity inclusion, handover, transition and exit strategies. They will also ensure appropriate linkages with other clusters, particularly Protection, WASH, Health, CCCM, and Education and inter-sectoral coordination and working groups on issues of interest to several clusters, including the promotion of settlements approaches.

- Senior Roving Cluster Coordinators

In 2016, the GSC introduced Senior Roving Cluster Coordinator (SRCC) roles to respond to essential country-level coordination needs. These roles proved highly effective and responsive to a range of local and contextualized needs. Two SRCCs will be available for deployments of up to six months to operationalize clusters in response to new crises or scale up existing shelter response in the face of escalating humanitarian needs. This function will be made available for immediate deployment to complex crises requiring senior expertise until longer-term coordination capacity is put in place. It is expected that SRCCs will minimize coordination gaps by providing surge capacity until a long-term position is in place.

- Roving Information Management Officers (RIMOs)

Building on the success of the SRCCs, this role aims to fill gaps and ensure consistency in Information Management (IM) capacity in emergencies. Recruitment gaps and delays, combined with high turnover of IM staff in the field, have at times impaired the capacity of national and sub-national clusters to base shelter response on solid data which is

systematically collected and analyzed. Additionally, the role of data in humanitarian responses and interagency and inter-cluster coordination requirements are expanding rapidly. As a result, the GSC adapt, develop and support more sophisticated tools for both field and global level needs. The provision of IM systems is a key function of clusters which, when properly set up and managed, allows for credible gap identification, assessment of needs and capacities of national partners and beneficiaries, provision of evidence-based information for advocacy and resource mobilization. They also generate the information required to inform key strategic processes, such as the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), and decision-making bodies, including Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and agencies headquarters. The Shelter Cluster IM services complement and support those provided by other agencies such as OCHA, which requires that clusters have their own IM capacity to feed their own IM systems. In addition to contributing to the overall IM processes coordinated by OCHA as the inter-cluster coordination body, by providing information on the shelter and settlements needs and response of humanitarian agencies, the shelter cluster IM capacity addresses shelter and settlements specific needs that cannot be met by other IM actors. The shelter cluster will continue to coordinate with other clusters and OCHA to seek synergies in meeting the IM needs of the overall response and avoid duplication of efforts. This is often done at the country-level through the inter-cluster IM working group and the global level through the IM community of practice. Since 2013, GFPs for Information Management have seen an overwhelming part of their time being dedicated to repeatedly covering gaps or delays in recruitment at country-level - their work needs to be re-focused on primarily providing global guidance and remote support and selected field missions for the purpose of setting or scaling up IM systems in country. The addition of RIMOs will allow a more flexible and effective support to country-level clusters.

1.2. Localization, capacity building, preparedness and outreach

Localization is central to effective humanitarian action. The GSC works closely with national counterparts in government, NGOs, civil society and the private sector to support local responders adding additional coordination resources in time of humanitarian need and mentoring, training, and capacity building during response. The GSC - through the work of the surge capacity – makes significant investment in preparedness and contingency planning, in support of local coordination structures and processes, in documenting responses in disaster-prone and conflict affected countries that are used as a country-specific resource and learning platform. The GSC works in support of national agencies in government, civil society, and the Red Cross Movement that are increasingly taking leading in-country roles in national humanitarian coordination structures. Support to this process includes investment in national staff capacity, training, workshops, in-country and remote mentoring, peer-to-peer exchanges, and the development of international communities of practice in which local responders can share experiences, approaches, and capacity development. Specific examples of recent localization work undertaken by the GSC include:

- Preparation and dissemination of Response Profiles that include key information such as national response systems, local construction practices and materials, and local environment and HLP issues. The development of these profiles will continue to be supported to include more countries and specific responses.

- Sub-national coordination: reviews and feedback collected by the GSC demonstrates that when the focus of coordination is at the sub-national level, shelter design and implementation take into account better the local context and local capacities and vulnerabilities. Shelter cluster coordination teams will continue to promote the establishment of sub-national coordination structures in coordination with government authorities and response agencies.
- UNHCR-led clusters were supported to increase their localization following a good practice from the Child Protection Area of Responsibility of the Protection Cluster. This was done by assessing the number of local partners and their perception of their role in the cluster and the overall partnership. Based on this, cluster coordinators will be supported to draft improvement plans.
- Significant effort has been made to engage local authorities, national and local NGOs and civil society organizations and encourage their contribution to coordination mechanisms as SAG members, co-chairs and Working Group leads. Their participation in international trainings and events will be supported to enable local voices to be heard and support more effective international humanitarian response.
- Country-level trainings have contributed to increase the understanding by local government counterparts and national shelter cluster partners of the international coordination system and the services that the GSC and country-level shelter clusters provide. They have also helped promote shelter and settlement approaches that are more effective in meeting the needs of the affected people, as well as engage local government, local partners and civil society organizations in shelter cluster activities. This program will support additional country-level trainings and workshops that encourage greater national and local ownership and leadership of humanitarian shelter and settlements coordination and response. The GSC has developed a standard and modular country-level training package that can be used to adapt to the specific training needs in any given country. The standard training package includes modules on key shelter and settlements concepts, vulnerability, assessments, standards, response and recovery in context, and cluster coordination through interactive and practical exercises. Each country level training will be tailored and adapted to the local context and will be designed in consultation with local government and country level cluster partners, including local NGOs. The training duration will vary according to the specific country needs but the standard package consists of a 3-day training in shelter and settlements coordination and response. These trainings are typically facilitated by members of the GSC Support Team in coordination with local partners and government staff where applicable. They target government officials, local partners, UN and NGO (international and local) program staff, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, who may work in country-level clusters or advance preparedness in case of cluster activation, as well as members of teams of other clusters (protection, WASH, health, education, CCCM). They will target countries where clusters are already active or where they may not be active at the moment but OCHA and/or the government are organizing contingency planning and simulation exercises. Additional trainings or modules on specific topics being advanced by the GSC WGs (such as the Settlements Approach in Urban Areas, Disability and Inclusion, NFIs or Cash and Markets, *inter alia*) will be considered for funding under the training budget of this program. Country-level cluster coordinators will carry out a needs analysis for capacity building and enhancement in consultation with government counterparts and cluster partners to identify priority capacity building needs and the most suitable ways to address these needs.

Capacity building, preparedness and outreach constitute key priorities in the current GSC Strategy. The GSC plays an important role in the promotion of the Shelter & Settlements sector through the development and constant improvement of professional knowledge, experience and standards. In particular, the GSC manages rigorous training programs for cluster coordination and technical support that promote industry-wide best practice, target humanitarian aid workers in key cluster positions globally and nationally, and are accredited at master's degree level by Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom. Global coordination and technical education set the standard for professional knowledge and attainment in the sector and is a major contribution to the effectiveness of field-led humanitarian responses as coordinators, and aspiring coordinators, have a common professional background, expectations and standards. Global shelter and settlements education is also the basis of national level training in which the content of the masters course syllabus is adapted to country-contexts and is used before and during emergencies to train and educate local counterparts in government and civil society taking on cluster coordination roles for the first time. The Global level coordinator's training has also been used extensively to engage with government partners and build coordination capacity and support for coordination mechanisms of senior government representatives with responsibility for humanitarian shelter and settlements. The GSC will implement 4 additional editions of the Humanitarian Shelter Coordination Training (HSCT) between October 2020 and September 2022. Each training will allow an average of 24 participants to acquire strategic and practical knowledge of shelter coordination policies, methods, tools and procedures in the humanitarian response system and be prepared to apply these in the context of a humanitarian crisis. Participation of national staff from country-level cluster and government partners will be encouraged.

Using the extensive resources of the Shelter Cluster website as a base, GSC educational programs also have a well-developed online component that supplements the in-person learning experience, draws on remote mentoring support from GFPs, and is a vital remote educational tool in the context of movement restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific examples of GSC online outreach has included YouTube videos on cyclone resilient building techniques, Facebook-promoted posts of IEC materials, cluster/country specific Facebook pages, and the industry-recognized shelter cluster website (www.sheltercluster.org), which has regularly updated response pages and are the "go-to" resource for any agency involved in a humanitarian shelter and settlements response. These resources are increasingly translated into languages to ensure greater awareness, access, and understanding. The Shelter Cluster already has a YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ShelterCluster>) that provides access to a diversity of information and education materials on humanitarian shelter and settlements. Given the current context of increased use of online resources and remote support, the GSC will seek to promote greater use of social media platforms such as its YouTube channel and its Twitter account, to disseminate training, information, education, and communication materials on a range of humanitarian shelter and settlements issues. Special attention will be given to make the training resources suitable for social media platforms and access through mobile devices and GSC partners will also be encouraged to consider the same for their agency initiatives.

The GSC Twitter account has been active since 2007. It shares information from the GSC and country-level clusters as well as re-tweets information relevant to shelter and settlements actors. The number of followers of the Shelter Cluster twitter account has increased from 3,041 in 2018 to 3,416 in 2020 (12% increase). A total of 319 messages have been tweeted since 2019 until today. The current reach of the Shelter Cluster twitter

account (followers of our followers who actively mention or retweet Shelter Cluster messages) is 3,598,015 people.

The GSC will develop a Learning Centre sub-module within its website that will use technologies specifically designed for adult, online learning. Trainings, such as the existing “More than just a Roof” self-managed learning is undergoing revision and updating to include multiple languages, access from mobile devices, new materials such as the revised Sphere standards, and improved interfaces. The Learning Centre is also envisioned to support monitoring users and certificates of completion.

Further contributing to effective localization, whenever possible the GSC commits to holding country-level preparedness and contingency planning workshops. These workshops draw on both in-country experience of coordinated shelter responses as well as experiences and lessons learned from related contexts elsewhere, bringing global and regional experience and expertise to specific country contexts. This has increasingly included peer-to-peer exchanges in which shelter and settlements coordinators from civil society, Red Cross Movement and government have learned from response, preparedness and contingency planning in neighboring or related contexts, facilitating capacity building through peer learning. The country-level preparedness and contingency planning workshops often build on or lead to enhanced skills training at local and national level for Shelter & Settlements response leaders. These processes aim to develop, revise and document coordination structures, roles and responsibilities, hub and sub-national coordination options, most likely scenarios, potential response strategy outlines, understandings of likely vulnerability and protections issues, and the development of a palette of response options that link shelter response with other key sectors. When possible, they should also include a shelter market assessment component, as baseline for post disaster use in countries with high disaster risk. Importantly, in-country contingency and preparedness planning are opportunities to reinforce the importance of the Settlements Approach incorporating and stronger focus on the spatial dimensions of shelter with response agencies, governments, and in the structure and content of the planning documents themselves.

Contingency and preparedness planning, country profiles and training and education of local response actors critically strengthen relevant, timely, appropriate and locally led humanitarian response. A key element of the contingency planning process is to ensure relevance and adaptability of the plans themselves to most likely disaster scenarios. Testing through desk-top exercises, and disaster simulations leading to revision of the plans is a core component of the cluster’s preparedness work. This is done in coordination with OCHA and host governments in the context of humanitarian system-wide preparedness and contingency planning activities, rather than as a stand-alone shelter cluster initiative. This enhances the impact and potential for inter-cluster synergies and collaboration that preparedness and contingency planning activities can have in an actual response.

Result 2: Humanitarian shelter and settlements practice is enhanced through an integrated system of analysis and learning, informing widely shared policy and guidance.



The following activities will contribute to achieve Result 2 of the current program proposal:

2.1. Analyze, learn, and improve responses

Assessments: The GSC remains committed to the systematic assessment and analysis of needs, to an evidence-based plan and to a culture of transparency and accountability to its stakeholders. In order to fulfil this commitment, an integrated system of assessment, monitoring, evaluation, research, capturing best practices, and disseminating learning will be put in place.

With the support of REACH and building on a long-standing partnership since 2014, shelter cluster assessments will be implemented in the aftermath of a crises by (1) providing dedicated human resources; (2) facilitating interagency assessments

coordination and roll-outs in the field; (3) ensuring timely assessment data analysis and dissemination of its results to enable quick and informed decision making. Interagency and multi-sectoral needs assessments inform operational strategies of humanitarian actors, cluster's contributions towards HRPs, HNOs and sector response plans, and provide credible baseline data at the onset of an emergency. They also give ownership of the process to cluster partners through interagency participation in the assessment process and set a culture of collaboration and accountability that can be maintained through the implementation of the strategy. The shelter cluster will promote joint assessments with other clusters to ensure inter-cluster coordination and efficient use of resources. This will also include response monitoring and evaluation activities.

The Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) is a self-assessment exercise in which all cluster partners participate, including UN agencies, national and international NGOs, national authorities and representatives of cross-cutting issues. As part of the exercise, a cluster monitors its performance against the six core cluster functions as set out in the Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level. It is a country-led process, supported by the GSC, which can help clusters fulfil their core cluster functions and become more efficient and effective coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national level in both sudden onset and protracted crises.

Learning and exchange: A critical component of institutional and sectoral learning is being able to engage in well-designed, lessons learned processes and to document good practice for shelter and settlements practitioners as well as to support in-country capacity. Each cluster activation has a reflection and lessons learned process that aims to support continuous development, documentation and improvement of both programming and coordination practice.

The Global Shelter Coordination workshop brings together shelter response agencies, governments, donors, UN Agencies, other clusters, OCHA, and key international civil society groups as well as coordinators from all active clusters globally. As such, it is the most important forum for the promotion of the shelter and settlements sector globally, establishment of common approaches and concepts, approaches, and the professionalization and institutionalization of the sector. It allows the exchange of practices and identification and development of shelter and settlements coordination and response tools and informs the workplan of the GSC Support Team.

Strategic partnerships: The GSC will also promote stronger linkages between academia and humanitarian partners, support research related initiatives and adopt practices that allow for sharing of knowledge and experience to a wider audience through the use of technology, building on the need to adapt the global level support to increased remote-based tools as a result of COVID-19.

The GSC will work through partners to strengthen existing links and forge new relationships with academic institutions around the world, including with institutions located in regions where humanitarian emergencies happen most frequently. In doing so the GSC and partners will increase access to research funding streams and play a role in directing research initiatives towards strategic priorities with increased local and global impact. The GSC will ensure increased engagement in relevant academic events and conferences, whilst ensuring continued and ongoing engagement with the existing academic and practitioner network led by InterAction. The GSC will establish a new role

of GFP for Research, specifically dedicated to advancing and fostering the links with academia.

There are already existing partnerships that will be continued and capitalized on. Academic partners include Oxford Brookes University, RMIT University in Australia, collaborations with the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble through CRATerre, the University of New South Wales (an academic at this university supported the publication of the academic-practitioner collaboration the State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements report), the University of Colorado Boulder (hosting of summer practicum for postgraduate students), the University of Sydney, University College London, and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The collaboration includes a range of activities, such as research in areas of common interest, joint publications, internship opportunities, development of tools and guidance, and training and educational opportunities. The GSC also actively participate in the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, which includes multiple academic and operational agencies. Finally, the GSC also works closely with InterAction, a long-standing member of the GSC SAG, supporting knowledge exchange and engaging research institutions. The GSC supports InterAction's Practitioners-Academic Forum and will seek to provide continuity to its current Roadmap for Research (R4R) initiative. The GSC will build on these links to ensure best practice and engage with leading humanitarian actors and thinkers.

Research and dissemination: Additional resources will be allocated in order to advance research and facilitate the linkage with academic partners in close cooperation with InterAction. This research agenda will link with advocacy as well as with other established key themes such as environmental and greening the response issues, leveraging the energy of the GSC Environment Community of Practice and the NFI Working Group and other NFI initiatives. This will contribute to reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian shelter responses. The GSC research initiatives will inform the advocacy, policy and guidance work outlined further below. The GSC advocacy efforts will be guided by solid research, through links with academia. The GSC policy and guidance work will be grounded on practice and learning from past responses.

In this regard, [Shelter Projects](#) is an initiative that for years has contributed to share practice and promote learning. Shelter Projects is a series of case-study compilations which illustrate some of the project options available to agencies and institutions working in humanitarian shelter. Through annual (2008, 2009, 2010) or biannual (2011-2012, 2013-2014, 2015-2016, 2017-2018) publications, Shelter Projects aims to improve the capacity of humanitarian actors to meet the sheltering needs of disaster and conflict affected populations, by disseminating shelter responses and learning from the experiences. This proposal will include complementary funding to the current existing funding for the next edition of Shelter Projects (2019-2020).

2.2. Advocacy, policy and guidance

Normative work such as the development of policies and standards, declarations and advocacy statements (such as the statement issued by the SAG in 2019 calling for the elimination of all but essential plastic packaging in relief items), regulatory frameworks, guidelines, and other instruments at the global, regional and country-levels are essential to promote quality and cohesive shelter and settlements response.

The GSC Strategic Advisory Group, Working Groups, and Communities of Practice play

an essential role in providing country-level clusters and humanitarian shelter and settlements actors with the required policy, guidance and tools to improve the humanitarian response to the emergency and transitional needs of affected populations. Their work is essential to ensure enhanced coherence and effectiveness, building on the experience and lessons learnt from past responses and the knowledge acquired, consolidated and shared through the GSC trainings and website.

The **Donor Consultation Group** (DCG) is a group of key donors actively engaged in humanitarian shelter and settlements and interested in contributing to the work of the SAG to advance the GSC strategic direction, overall priorities, and advocacy in support of enhanced humanitarian shelter response. Its key functions include:

- Planning and strategy development: Advise on the implementation of the GSC strategy, based on the strategic directions established at the GSC Meeting and by the SAG.
- Supporting GSC service delivery: Advise on, support and actively contribute to GSC activities and services through the Working Groups and Communities of Practice as appropriate.
- Advocacy: Advise on, support and actively promote GSC advocacy strategies, statements and positioning on global issues as required, including but not limited to, the profiling of shelter and settlements needs and response, the promotion of humanitarian shelter coordination, and the resourcing of humanitarian shelter response.
- Monitoring and reporting: Advise on adherence to global standards and benchmarks for shelter operations and coordination.
- Contingency planning/preparedness: Promote and support cluster/sector preparedness including stock prepositioning, technical human resource capacities and skillsets, and shelter cluster contingency planning at country level.
- Informing strategic decision making at intergovernmental level: Inform the representation and promotion of shelter related issues in appropriate intergovernmental bodies and initiatives.

Given the increasing role, expertise and importance of donors, which goes well beyond the provision of resources, the GSC will seek to revitalize and expand the Donor Consultation Group in order to promote the effective involvement of donors in advancing strategic areas of humanitarian shelter and settlements coordination and response. Furthermore, the GSC will foster and capitalize on this dialogue platform to shape its future beyond the timeframe of this proposal and to devise an inclusive, cohesive, effective and relevant new strategy after 2022. A key component in the revitalization of the DCG will be the engagement of development actors, in order to bring their perspectives to the GSC activities and help define and bridge the humanitarian-development collaboration in a more effective manner.

2.3. Increased access to information and knowledge by humanitarian shelter and settlements actors

Reliable, widely accessible, and predictable sharing of information is one of the cornerstones to effective coordination. Since 2010, IFRC and UNHCR have developed a web-based information platform called "ShelterCluster.org" to support communications and dissemination of information among cluster stakeholders in active deployments. It also

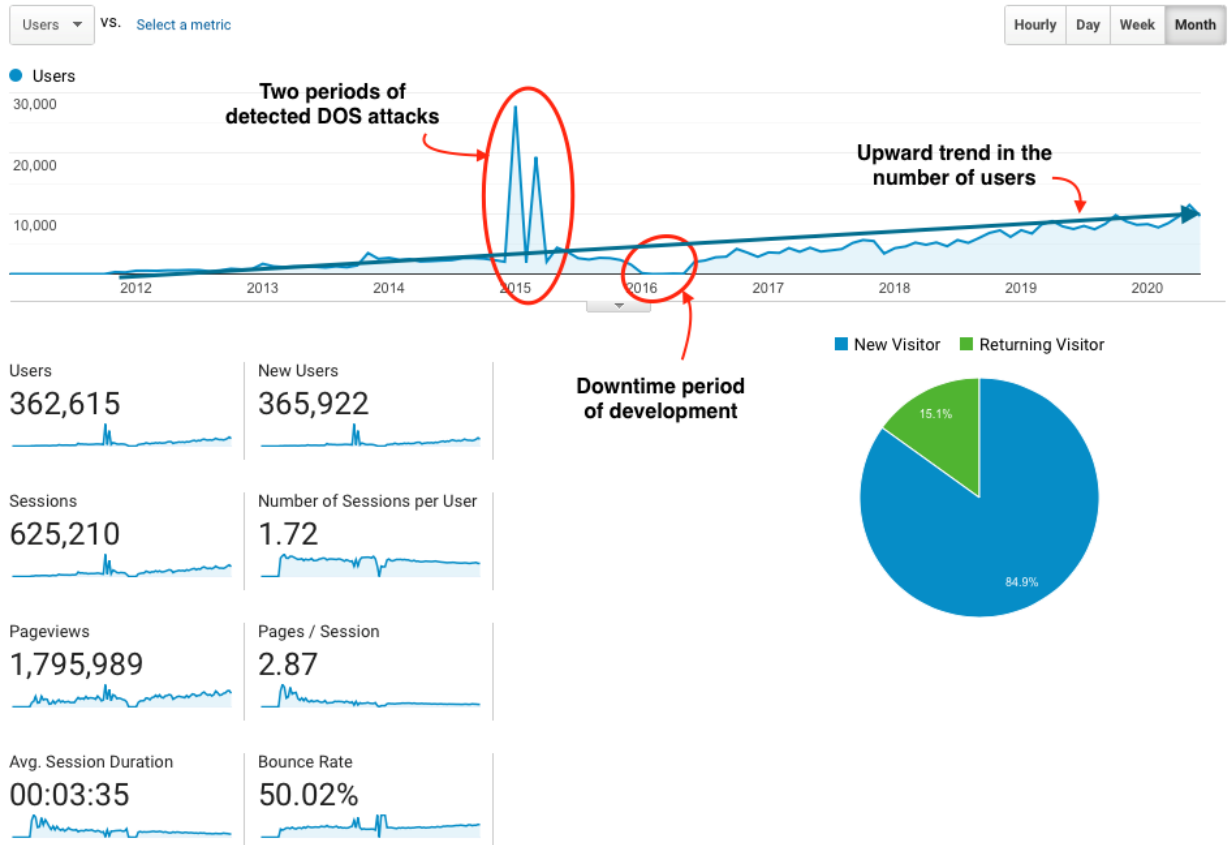
serves as the cluster "memory" and knowledge management system for past responses, documentation, and record of good practice. Within the platform, members of the cluster can intuitively navigate to a particular response and retrieve the most current strategic and technical guidance and activity updates, while also capitalizing upon lessons learned and products developed in previous responses in the same country or region.

This website is designed to be the virtual embodiment of the principles and values that the cluster approach represents: inclusiveness of all stakeholders, transparency, and collaboration in the effort to better coordinate between agencies and improve responses. Sharing of information is vital to achieve our mandate and whether its enabling the platform to better collect information or exchange content with other platforms (such as Humanitarian response.info or HumanitarianID) we need to ensure that our online systems engage with those of other stakeholders. ShelterCluster.org's will continue to incrementally improve in these areas, expand on the types of information and media we use, and enable deeper engagement with partners to solve problems related to crises and general practices for sheltering. An example of this spirit of innovation is the development of a companion Shelter Cluster mobile application, available for both iOS and Android devices, that provides an additional mobile channel for materials and information available on the ShelterCluster.org platform. The framework for this concept has been developed to leverage improved two-way communication between the end users and the coordination support teams that the cluster provides. The potential for this technology includes rapid dissemination of alerts and email, notifications of availability of new information, and structured field-based data collection for situational monitoring.

Google Analytics has been a service used by the ShelterCluster.org website since November of 2011, which has allowed the GSC to gather metrics on the site usage including the number of users, page views, number of sessions per user, etc. This service has provided the GSC a valuable view into the audience of the website, what parts of the website are the most popular, and ways to improve the experience for the audience. The image below is a capture from Google Analytics over the entire lifetime of the platform and key highlights include:

- The website has had a steadily growing audience. The GSC predicts this trend will continue as functionality improves and the maintenance and hosting requirements may also require additional resources.
- In late 2014 the GSC was informed that the website had experienced hacking attacks. This was detected using Google Analytics where there was a spike in the regular activity. This led the GSC to overhaul the platform and move it into the current Drupal platform.

The GSC anticipates further integration of the potential of using Google Analytics with the website. The GSC had begun enabling the counts on the number of views that documents get so it can publish these metrics and understand what the most popular content on the site is, which will provide greater understanding on to what extent some of the products developed and disseminated have been taken up.



Usage of the various platforms has been robust and widely complimented as a highly effective tool. Some statistics on platform usage in the year between June 1, 2019 and June 1, 2020 include:

- 96,612 unique visitors to the site over 150,688 sessions (1.54 sessions per user) and viewing 342,320 pages or 2.27 pages per session. The average session on the website is almost 3 minutes per session (2:51 average). These are quite significant numbers since most visits are to retrieve documents that are being circulated. We can also infer that there are about 1,300 users who are frequent users of the site with repeating visits.
- The 5 countries most visitors are from are the United States, Philippines, UK, Netherlands, and Yemen comprising about 40% of the audience during that period. The remaining 60% of the audience comes from other countries, most of which are countries that the cluster is active in or shelter actors have headquarters in. The website has received visits from nearly every country in the world.
- Despite the mobile app not being promoted widely yet, it is being used by 408 users and those users average viewing 9.2 pages of content per visit, which is very high and shows high potential for the tool but also shows that some geographic contexts use mobile technologies more than others.
- The most active responses include Iraq, Yemen, Mozambique, Syria/Turkey x-border, and the Global groups.

Because the ShelterCluster.org website and app are living, evolving components of a single, coherent communication platform, it will require ongoing maintenance, upgrading,

development, technical support, and hosting. Adequate financial and human resources will be required to facilitate the following:

1. Training of field-based information managers to manage content and tailor country-level sub-sites to suit the needs of the local context.
2. Global-level remote support for country-level information managers to ensure a high level of consistency, adherence to best practice, and uploading of content from global level resources.
3. Third-party technical support agreements with a competent development services company in case of site failure or as backup and to assist with ongoing site functional and interface improvements.
4. Ongoing development and evolution of site functionality to better support the needs of the cluster partners.
5. Take full advantage of its multi-language functionality to have the country-level cluster websites in the local language and other languages needed.

The global cluster leads will continue to work closely with other agencies leading the cluster at country-level to ensure coordination and coherence in the country level sites as well as share the responsibilities to efficiently develop, populate, and maintain the website in a joint manner. The website will remain managed by the GFPs for Information Management with support from an expert third-party developer. Near future features to be developed include:

- Expand interface translation to more localized languages.
- Broaden the ability for end-users to securely provide content and participate in data collection and observation recording practices.
- Provide localized community discussion groups between authenticated, trusted users,
- Leverage interface and technical improvements made through other related working group efforts such as the BHA funded IEC Compendium project linked to the GSC Promoting Safer Building Working Group.
- Provide a dedicated online learning platform for training materials and certification, increasing access to learning activities by local actors.
- Provide public visibility to the usage metrics of the site including highlighting popular documents.

Strategic Priorities (cutting across activities for both results):

All activities under the two main results will operate through the lens of these strategic areas of focus. For all activities, the GSC will consider how they contribute to localization, how they advance the settlements approach and how they connect with other clusters and promote inter-cluster coordination. While the GSC will always be mindful of all three of these priorities, the relevance and importance of these three considerations will vary at different levels of engagement (global, regional, national and sub-national) and will require different actions from the coordination teams.

i. Settlements Approach

The GSC recognizes the importance of the Settlements Approach to humanitarian sheltering and promotes this as the programmatic basis for shelter response. At global and country level, the cluster engages across the different humanitarian sectors to ensure that shelter

response is integrated with WASH, protection, health, education, among others, at the programmatic and strategic levels and through different mechanisms for response management and coordination. This approach also addresses the pressing challenge of urban shelter response which is inherently cross-sectoral and involves multiple and diverse stakeholders. The GSC through the Settlements Approaches in Urban Areas WG, under the leadership of InterAction, CRS, and REACH/IMPACT Initiatives, is working to develop this concept further and bring greater clarity to humanitarian stakeholders on this key response approach.

ii. Localization

The GSC recognizes the importance of local context and ownership in shelter responses and that effective localization is central to improve humanitarian response. Significant effort and resources are invested in education, training, capacity development, engagement with different levels of government as well as NGOs, civil society groups and private sector organizations through contingency and preparedness planning processes. It is recognized, however, that the GSC brings significant international as well as in-country experience that can be decisive, especially in major disasters where local responders and government agencies may be severely stretched. In supporting wider processes of localization, the GSC recognizes that response must be 'as local as possible, as international as necessary'.

iii. Inter-cluster coordination

The GSC is acutely conscious that the reality of humanitarian needs are not neatly divided into areas of responsibility for the sectors of the international cluster system. This is especially the case in urban areas given their complex interdependence. Consequently, in addition to its support for the concept of Settlements Approaches, the GSC at global level and at national level proactively engages with other sectors and clusters to ensure joined-up, coordinatized and holistic humanitarian response programming that ensures strong connections between shelter, health, WASH, protection, and education among others. At country-level (and emphasized in all cluster trainings and workshops) the cluster supports inter-sectoral coordination, OCHA processes, and participates actively in HCT meetings.

In this sense the collaboration with key clusters such as WASH, Protection, Health and CCCM will be enhanced. This will be done by promoting integrated initiatives at country-level, joint assessments, joint position papers, and joint events.

At the global level, the Global Cluster Coordinators Group is comprised of the Global Cluster Coordinators and OCHA. They work collaboratively to help break down silos between clusters and make inter-cluster coordination more effective and responsive to the needs of the HCT, cluster partners and ultimately to people living in crisis settings. The shelter and settlements sector is represented at this important forum by the GSC lead-agencies, IFRC and UNHCR. This forum ensures that the sector is represented at the highest level, and that issues of concern for the cluster – such as the settlements approach – can be raised and discussed with other clusters, influencing all cluster activities and responses globally.