A Review of the IFRC-led Shelter Coordination Group Bangladesh Cyclone Sidr Response 2007-2008

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Co-Operation and Development
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
CDMP	Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
DFID	Department For International Development
DMB	Disaster Management Bureau
DMIC	Disaster Management Information Centre
ECB	Emergency Capacity Building Project
ERC	United Nations Emergency Response Coordinator
FACT	Field Assessment Coordination Team (IFRC)
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
Federation	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
HIC	Humanitarian Information Centre
HR	Human Resources
IASC	United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organisation of Migration
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
PNS	Participating National Society
PWD	Public Works Department (Government of Bangladesh)
SCG	Shelter Coordination Group
TWIG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	United Nations World Health organisation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Federation and its partners responded promptly to requests for shelter coordination after Cyclone Sidr in November 2007. However, conflicting messages from the UN on cluster activation led to role and status ambiguity for the shelter coordination team and confusion for its partners. In the absence of clear directives, consistent terminology, understanding and commitment concerning humanitarian reform, activation of the cluster after the cyclone was harder.

    Agreement in principle to deploy the Emergency Shelter Cluster should be made during contingency planning when possible. Negotiations should involve Head of Delegation, national society of the country and Secretariat to ensure that local agreements accord with the Federation's MoU with OCHA. The Federation should aim to secure written agreement before deploying surge capacity.

2. Deployment began six days after Cyclone Sidr. The first team combined technical skill with experience in Bangladesh, the Federation and previous cluster deployments. The expatriate team of four was the largest yet fielded by the Federation and partners. This team was complemented in December-January by appointment of five Bangladeshi staff in field information and administrative roles. UN Habitat provided an adviser on early recovery.

3. Reconciling different expectations, competences and management styles within the coordination team was a challenge: consultation and inclusion needed to be balanced with leadership and timely decision-making, coordination skills with technical ones. Competence-based recruitment would test personal and technical competences and help widen the pool of potential recruits in terms of number and diversity. However, these issues do not detract from the achievement of the SCG team in establishing the shelter cluster for the first time in Bangladesh, in a highly complex working environment.

4. The departure of coordinator, assistant coordinator and information manager within five weeks stretched the cluster's credibility and relationships, and put pressure on staff providing cover. 'Second-wave' staff, recruited with assistance from ACTED and RedR, were of high calibre but placed in a difficult position with, in one case, no handover notes or briefing. The global cluster should take steps to extend minimum contract length and reduce turnover in future deployments.

5. The IFRC delegation in Bangladesh provided strong, consistent support to the SCG. Support from Geneva, initially good, appeared to diminish somewhat with time. Requests from Dhaka competed for attention with Federation operations. Attention to professional queries and duty of care issues, such as end of mission arrangements, were sometimes delayed or overlooked. Dedicated support would free from role conflict and overload staff responsible for other Federation programmes. This would also conform to good practice in surge capacity and alliance management and assist performance monitoring.

6. By the time the SCG strategy was in draft, the government was declaring a move to recovery. Whether or not the declaration was timely, it risked sidelining emergency shelter need and the SCG's skills. A revised template would help speed development

of field strategy, ensure its coherence with different policy documents and enable consultation. Strategy was supplemented by practical recommendations on shelter. Where, as in Bangladesh, natural disasters are recurrent, such recommendations could be augmented by work plan or critical path tools to help prioritise, schedule and monitor shelter options. This would assist coordinators in maintaining and justifying clearer focus on emergency shelter.

7. Notwithstanding this delay, factors beyond the SCG's control included inadequate shelter sector funding, agencies' geographical preferences and limited participation by government and UN in the SCG. These factors further reduced the impact of SCG strategy. They highlighted the need for wider and deeper buy-in to humanitarian reform and for assumptions to be clearly identified in cluster strategy.

8. The Google groups website was set up on 22 November and remains in use at the time of writing. It enabled exchange and provided a valuable resource on information management, shelter design, costs and better building. Key documents are not always easy to locate, however, owing to site design and document management issues. Some of these were overcome during cluster response to Cyclone Nargis.

9. Without communications strategy, logo, corporate identity or a consistent name, the mandate and messages of the SCG were harder to convey. There were no printed materials to explain the SCG's role. While association with the Federation was widely recognised, not all delegates, delegations and national societies were aware of or familiar with the cluster approach or the expectations it placed on them. Attention to communication both before and during activation would have helped the SCG reach stakeholders earlier.

10. Against a background of limited knowledge in country, information management by the SCG was a success. Reporting categories and templates were introduced and, with some difficulty, data collection maintained. Lack of information, expertise or capacity by partners were continuous problems addressed through outreach and support by successive information staff in a role which could be expanded in future deployments. In the absence of OCHA, the first SCG information manager was praised for his role in the establishment of an information management group, for innovation with UN and government counterparts and for contributing to lessons learning and future preparedness in Bangladesh. Acting on his recommendation, the shelter cluster held information management training for global partners in 2008.

11. The SCG took part in a joint needs assessment, led by the Early Recovery Cluster, in mid-December 2007. The early recovery adviser played a key role. This exercise and a ward-level assessment by partners in Barguna in January found significant gaps in provision and technical capacity. Findings informed advocacy on shelter gaps and on the vulnerability of those without land tenure. An assessment framework and personnel should be available at the start of response. Delayed assessment resulted in delayed access to donor funding in some cases. More support to partners on assessment might help overcome problems relating to information management.

12. Coordination, TWIG and SAG meetings started in Dhaka in November and in Barisal and most affected districts in December. Divisional and district meetings, facilitated through a structure of local agencies acting as focal points, became the hub of SCG coordination by January. The field coordinator was seen as dedicated and

inspirational, and field work by the SCG' national and international staff and partners helped fill local gaps in public information and coordination still evident at the time of this review.

13. The SCG and WASH Cluster maintained close working relations, attempting to ensure that shelter and WASH programmes dovetailed. The impact of SCG coordination was limited by slow development of shelter strategy and the absence of a government shelter counterpart. The latter may ultimately be beyond the control of the shelter cluster but identification of government and UN counterparts and engagement with them should be higher priority in coordinator training and when activating the cluster.

14. The SCG and partners held two well-attended workshops in Barisal on cyclone resistant shelter and use of timber. Partners were concerned that more than one million makeshift and self-built emergency and transitional shelters would fail to withstand the monsoon and represent a hazard to those living in or near them. Information about safe building was on the SCG website and in the shelter booklet but stronger messages on Health & Safety would accord with Do No Harm, construction safety and the draft communications strategy. Explicit Health & Safety messages should be part of training, IEC and material provision.

15. TWIG and field meetings helped collate shelter designs and costings and draft a booklet on cyclone resilient shelter and shelter principles. These were finalised by the technical and early recovery advisers after SCG handover to UNDP in February, endorsed by government and a booklet published. The delay in agreeing designs by the SCG and by government was a source of frustration for partners. However, booklet and designs remain valuable resources for shelter, early recovery and disaster preparedness. A second TWIG on landlessness, led by UN Habitat, was established in February 2008 and moved this issue onto the government agenda.

16. A SCG press release issued by the Federation a month after the cyclone highlighted a shortfall in emergency shelter for over 180,000 families. Despite humanitarian reform, there appeared to be no coordinating body able to lead on and question the overall gap in funding for emergency and transitional shelter. After handover to UNDP in February, the SCG set up an advocacy working group, led by Oxfam. A second SCG press release on shelter shortfall and building safety was issued by the Federation in April. The global cluster's support remained necessary because the UN in Bangladesh was unwilling to lead the country level cluster on this issue.

17. The SCG referenced Sphere shelter standards in training and recommendations. The second Barisal workshop found almost no awareness of Sphere. After handover to UNDP, Sphere dimensions appeared to become a maximum not a minimum standard in shelter specifications. Though Bangladesh forestry regulations were included in the cluster's timber workshop, the national building codes on access for disabled persons were not reflected in *build back better* messages. Pre-agreement by the global cluster and joint advocacy with national and international standards bodies would aid partners in addressing and promoting relevant standards.

18. The SCG timber workshop reinforced government messages on protection of the Sunderbans rainforest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a source of sustainable livelihoods for many thousands of people. There is otherwise little evidence of

attention to the cross-cutting themes of environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and age in SCG strategic documents, reports and minutes. SCG partners almost certainly had local information to share on issues such as disability and gender. Explicit inclusion of cross-cutting themes in strategy documents, website and in meeting and training agendas would help ensure consistent attention to them.

19. The Federation's obligations to the SCG did not extend beyond the emergency phase. UN Habitat initially agreed to assume responsibility but had insufficient funds. The Federation belatedly agreed to hand the SCG over to the Early Recovery Cluster led by UNDP. Partners were surprised. There were still emergency shelter needs and UNDP had had only limited prior involvement in the SCG. Informants viewed the Federation as an independent, impartial coordinator in a difficult sector. The Federation should involve country level cluster partners in discussions on handover or closure. It should consider how to extend its role in coordination and advocacy in response to needs in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Activation

R1 Review IASC and Federation guidance on cluster activation to achieve clarity of directives and consistency of terminology.

R2 Aim to negotiate Emergency Shelter Cluster deployment during contingency planning. Involve Head of Delegation, national society of the country and Secretariat in negotiations to ensure that local agreements accord with IFRC-OCHA MoU. Aim to secure written agreement before deployment.

R3 Keep a central archive of cluster documentation in Geneva for purposes of accountability and lesson learning, and in case of dispute.

Staffing

R4 Develop cluster competence framework to establish team member personal and technical competences and to widen pool of recruits in respect of number and diversity.

R5 Consider retaining assistant coordinator role to enable field coordination to begin as soon as possible.

Continuity

R6 Minimise early turn-over. Extend minimum contract in 'first wave' deployment to eight weeks. Review options for continuity planning, including suggestions by informants included in this review.

R7 Ensure 'second wave' staff receive handover briefing and/or notes including programme information and orientation on Red Cross code and principles.

Federation support

R8 Include dedicated back-up and a 'help desk' in surge capacity. It should manage both programme and duty of care queries and issues, adapting Federation tools and procedures, e.g. end of mission report formats, where necessary.

R9 Make or commission occasional field visits for field support, mentoring and monitoring.

Handover

R10 Consider extending Federation-led coordination and advocacy in response to evidence of need at country level. Involve country level cluster partners early in discussions about extension, closure or handover.

R11 Include information about closure / handover in leaflet (R17)

Strategy

R12 Develop revised strategy template for use at country level. Ensure coherence with policy documents and terms of reference, for example on transitional shelter and land tenure issues. Include strategic assumptions, such as engagement of government and UN partners.

R13 Consider work plan and/or critical path techniques to help staff and partners set priorities and schedule and monitor timely progression from emergency to transitional and permanent shelter.

Communications

R14 Include communications strategy in template (R12), building on Bangladesh draft communications strategy.

R15 Develop logo and corporate identity for global and country use.

R16 Develop standard names, formats, file formats and metadata for key documents. ICRC may have information to share in this respect.

R17 Develop leaflet to introduce Emergency Shelter Cluster role and mandate. Translate into key languages and distribute within Federation, ICRC and among partners.

Information Management

R18 Consider early appointment of additional (local) staff to support information management.

Assessment

R19 Prioritise early availability of emergency shelter assessment tools from global Cluster(s) and other sources.

R20 Prioritise early availability of personnel to support assessment and gap analysis at the start of deployment.

Coordination

R21 Aim to identify a named government counterpart when negotiating cluster deployment (R2).

R22 Reinforce strategies for engaging government and UN counterparts within shelter and generic cluster training

Advocacy

R23 Consider setting up an advocacy group at the start of response and seconding a Federation/partner specialist to the country level cluster.

Training

R24 Complement *build back better* training with explicit Health & Safety messages. These should be present in job descriptions, Strategic Frameworks and in training and IEC materials directed at partners, builders, self-builders and the public.

Application of standards

R25 Consider working with Sphere to translate shelter standards into Bengali.

R26 Agree national and international standards and regulations appropriate in shelter cluster rollout. Identify/develop relevant documents and translations.

Cross-cutting issues

R27 Make promotion of cross-cutting issues explicit and consistent in strategic documents, meeting and workshop agendas and websites.

R28 Identify with country level partners resources for use in local promotion of cross-cutting issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of this review

This review draws on desk research, interviews and written communication with informants. It is not a general evaluation of shelter response following Cyclone Sidr although it reflects the opinions of stakeholders. Its primary aim is to identify lessons and provide recommendations on future shelter coordination by the Federation and the Emergency Shelter Cluster.

1.2 Humanitarian reform

The cluster approach is part of a global programme of humanitarian reform which began in 2005. The programme followed the Humanitarian Response Review, commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) in 2005.[1] Humanitarian reform is led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in which UN agencies are principals and NGO networks and the Federation invitees.

A response to systemic weakness in response, the humanitarian reform programme is based on three 'pillars':

- The *cluster approach*: addressing the need for 'adequate capacity and predictable leadership in all sectors' of humanitarian response.

- *Humanitarian financing*: addressing the need for 'adequate, timely and flexible financing' of humanitarian response, notably through the CERF.

- *Humanitarian Coordinator strengthening*: addressing the need for 'effective leadership and coordination in emergencies' by the senior UN figure in country [2]

Humanitarian reform acknowledges that effective response depends on the quality of *partnership* between the UN agencies, NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent agencies that respond globally to emergencies. Commitment to partnership between these constituencies was endorsed through a set of principles developed in 2007.[3]

Of particular relevance to the present report is the cluster approach. However, the other 'pillars' - *Humanitarian Coordinator strengthening*, *humanitarian finance* and *partnership* - are, together with human resources, interlinked drivers of effectiveness and quality.

1.3 Cluster approach

The IASC principals endorsed the cluster approach in December 2005. The eleven global clusters are seen as a mechanism that can strengthen response by ensuring predictability, accountability and partnership among agencies in different sectors. These include health, emergency shelter and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene).

At global level, a cluster is effectively a standing committee but its lead agency acts as a response unit. Cluster lead agencies are responsible for technical support, long term

planning and enhancing partnership. They set standards and policy, build surge capacity, provide operational support and channel funds to country level clusters. At country level, the cluster approach is expected to ensure coherent and effective sectoral response.

Given the short history of humanitarian reform, it is not surprising that cluster operation, particularly at country level, is open to interpretation and disagreement. A number of circulars provide guidance on cluster working (see Annex A). They reflect important debate in the face of growing experience and evolving practice but do not always provide unambiguous direction or consistent terminology.

An evaluation of the cluster approach in 2007 notes that 'questions and disagreements about activation in emergencies' persisted after a Standard Operating Procedure was issued in May 2007.[4] Partnership does not stand or fall on the basis of paperwork alone but guidance notes in circulation could be reviewed for clarity and consistency.

1.4   Emergency Shelter Cluster

Partners in the global cluster are Care International, CHF International, IFRC, Norwegian Refugee Council, OCHA, OXFAM, Shelter Centre and UN-HABITAT. At country level, a global member, local and national government and any NGO involved in emergency shelter may be a cluster partner.[5]

Emergency Shelter is one of only two clusters chaired by agencies other than UN or IOM. An IFRC-OCHA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) states that within an 'agreed coordination system' the Federation expects to lead or convene the Emergency Shelter Cluster at country level following natural or technological disaster. It pledges to inform the ERC if it cannot. UNHCR leads the cluster in response to conflict.

The IFRC-OCHA MoU defines a disaster as:

> *A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.*

It defines emergency shelter as:

> *The provision of basic and immediate shelter needs necessary to ensure the survival of disaster affected persons, including "rapid response" solutions such as tents, insulation materials, other temporary emergency shelter solutions, and shelter related non-food items. This definition explicitly excludes transitional and permanent housing.*

The MoU emphasises that the Federation's commitment at country level is not open-ended and that it is not 'Provider of Last Resort' if a gap in the provision of shelter goods and services remains unfilled.

1.5 Cyclone Sidr [6]

Cyclone Sidr struck coastal and central areas of Bangladesh on 15 November 2007. The Category 4 storm was followed by a tidal wave up to 10 metres high. Approximately 3,400 people lost their lives and 55,000 were injured.

Over 3 million people were helped through government and non-government preparedness measures to move to cyclone shelters and safer buildings. The Bangladesh Red Crescent played a major role. Many more people were saved than during Cyclone Gorky which claimed 138,000 lives in 1991. Cyclone Nargis, a far weaker storm, is thought to have killed 100,000 people in neighbouring Burma in 2008.

Nine districts of Bangladesh were severely affected by Cyclone Sidr. The ensuing tidal wave broke coastal and river embankments, inundated low-lying *char* land in the Bay of Bengal and flooded inland regions. High winds destroyed buildings, trees and part of the Sunderbans rainforest.

One and a half million houses were destroyed or badly damaged across a large region, far from Dhaka. The value of housing losses was estimated at $800m. Widespread damage and destruction were also caused to food stocks agricultural and fishing assets.

Most devastated were the districts of Bagherat, Barguna, Patuakhali and Pirojpur where estimates of those living in poverty comprised a third to over half the population. Those affected included landless squatters, often forced to make their homes on land outside the embankments which provided a measure of defence against rivers and sea.

2.   SHELTER COORDINATION GROUP

2.1   Cluster activation

Views differ on how the Emergency Shelter Cluster was activated in Bangladesh. Senior UN staff in Bangladesh had received OCHA training about the cluster approach earlier in 2007. They had in turn provided training for NGOs in Bangladesh. However, the clusters were not activated at the time of the 2007 floods.

OCHA advised the Resident Coordinator's office on cluster activation before and after Cyclone Sidr struck. The day after the cyclone, the Resident Coordinator discussed the cluster approach with UN counterparts. The Government was unfamiliar with the approach and the UN in Bangladesh appears to have been ambivalent about it.

> *The fear was they [the clusters] would not recognise the capacity of the Bangladesh government. These things happen continuously in Bangladesh. They have the ministry and an institutional framework. It was all there and if you didn't understand it and had a parallel system it might undermine the government.*

NGOs asked both the IFRC delegation in Dhaka and the Federation in Geneva to provide guidance and leadership on emergency shelter response. A senior officer arrived from Geneva three days after the cyclone to join the Federation's Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) and to advise on shelter cluster activation (see timeline in Annex B).

The Head of Delegation and senior officer discussed shelter coordination and cluster activation with UNDP and the Resident Coordinator. With agreement from the Head of Delegation and BDRCS, though in advance of formal approval by the ERC, the global cluster began deployment on 21 November of a 'Shelter Working Group' or 'Shelter Coordination Team.' On 26 November, the ERC issued a letter approving activation of several clusters, including Emergency Shelter, led by the Federation.[7] According to the IASC, the cluster approach was formally activated in response to the new emergency on 28 November.[8]

On 30 November, following advice that UN Habitat was sending a mission to support both the SCG and Early Recovery Cluster in Bangladesh, the Resident Coordinator advised the SCG that the clusters in Bangladesh were 'never activated globally' and were 'not driven by any international protocol.' [9] The UN's Early Recovery Framework reported in 2008 that 'key UN agencies and the IFRC opted for an unofficial activation of the cluster system.' [10]

However, minutes of the Joint Early Recovery Coordination Meeting on 13 December record activation by the IASC of the cluster approach, including the shelter cluster.[11] On 20 December the Resident Coordinator's office held a 'regular IASC inter-cluster meeting' with other UN cluster leads but with no representation from the SCG.[12]

In the absence of archives or a written agreement, it is not known what messages were received by the Federation in Geneva or the ERC in New York. The decision in

Bangladesh and the way in which it was communicated, led to role and status ambiguity for the SCG and its staff and confusion for SCG partners.

> *Somewhat confusingly, cluster leads continue to argue that there has merely been an 'informal' rather than a 'full' activation of the approach, though few can explain precisely what this means.* [13]

> *Were they formally activated? I thought they were. ..We were surprised at the end when … we were told they were only local clusters.*

> *It's like going out to play cricket and finding the other side playing football.*

2.2   Staffing

The Assistant Coordinator arrived in Dhaka on 22 November, seven days after the cyclone. He set up communications and logistics with help from the delegation and from UNDP who provided office space at the UN's main building. By 5 December the expatriate SCG team was complete. It became the largest team fielded by the Emergency Shelter Cluster.

The first expatriate team combined previous experience in Bangladesh with Red Cross and cluster experience. The coordinator was a former cyclone preparedness delegate with the BDRCS and former Head of Delegation in Bangladesh. The assistant coordinator, information manager and field coordinator brought experience from previous cluster deployments. The technical adviser, a Bengali speaker with experience in Bangladesh, was recruited by Care International. UN Habitat in Geneva provided an adviser on early recovery for the SCG and the Early Recovery Cluster in December 2007 and in February 2008, with interim support from a Dhaka-based adviser.

All but two of the expatriate team had received generic cluster and/or shelter cluster training. The second coordinator expanded the host country team in January. Host country staff roles were assistant information manager, field assistant, and administrative manager. All national and international SCG staff, with the exception of the head of administration and the early recovery adviser, were male.

Managers in international alliances, such as the clusters, occupy demanding roles. Reconciling different expectations in Bangladesh was challenging. Some informants believed a technical background essential, others that leadership and communication skills were more important.

> *They should be strong in building because people come for advice, especially from government. Without a technical background the cluster is not credible.*

> *Communications is the total work. It sums up what we're for.*

Other informants wondered why regional staff with experience in the tsunami response had not been brought in or local staff trained to take over earlier.

> *Why didn't they include the Sri Lanka or Indonesia or Maldives construction teams? You could have had a mixed local and international team.*

> *You should be able to mobilise national people.*

Others emphasised the importance of Red Cross or cluster experience.

> *I think its good you get people from inside the Red Cross family because they know one another and/or one another's organisations.*

> *It's a very complex operating environment. You need someone with previous experience.*

Overall, the skill, energy and dedication of SCG staff and their achievement in establishing a shelter cluster and its products and services for the first time in Bangladesh was much appreciated. Competence-based recruitment [14] would help widen the future pool of recruits in terms of number and diversity.[15] In the response to Cyclone Sidr, for example, a team more diverse in terms of ethnicity could have aided continuity. Competence-based recruitment would help establish and make transparent the personal as well as technical competences needed in the relatively new role of cluster coordination.[16]

2.3   Continuity

Three expatriate staff – coordinator, assistant coordinator and information manager – left within the first five weeks of cluster activation in mid-November 2007. A replacement information manager, previously with ACTED in Bangladesh, was seconded in December. A replacement coordinator, recruited by RedR Australia, began work in January 2008.

The first information manager provided a handover briefing and remote support to his successor, and feedback to UN counterparts on lessons learned. The second coordinator arrived a few weeks after his predecessor had departed, and had no handover or notes. Given the close association of the SCG with the Federation, both programme and Red Cross orientation were needed for staff recruited by other partners.

The second team were of high calibre and made important changes, for example, increasing the number of local staff and improving relations with at least one major donor. However, many interviewees noted concerns about lack of continuity.

> *They should train more people for the roster if they haven't got enough… You need 6-8 weeks to settle down [but] then you leave. You need continuity, especially in a team leader.*

> *Links with the government could also have been strengthened at initial stages. However, due to the gaps and high rotation of staff, the momentums gained at some points were lost for lack of consistent follow up.*

Continuity planning in surge response is a challenge for all humanitarian organisations. SCG staff, other interviewees and People In Aid suggest options for the Emergency Shelter Cluster: [17]

- Contract first teams for longer – for at least three months
- Utilise or contract HR expertise in the field, for example from Federation or counterpart organisations or in local recruitment consultancies

- Begin looking for a second team as soon as the first is deployed
- Seek greater work force diversity when recruiting for standby rosters in accordance with Federation policy and good practice[18]
- Identity national counterparts sooner
- Have a potential assistant coordinator, national or international, shadow an experienced coordinator during response
- Use interns, for example, to support information management by cluster partner agencies
- Provide coaching or mentoring for team members, national or international, during response, using Headquarters staff or previous cluster staff as consultants
- Provide ongoing training for roster staff
- Consider as candidates for cluster training and roster those who have worked in the cluster but not yet received generic or shelter cluster training
- Build coordination expertise and capacity among national and regional partners

2.4   Federation support

The 2007 Cluster Approach Evaluation found that lead agencies in all clusters had yet to institutionalise their commitment to the new approach. Extra work was likely to fall to headquarters teams already engaged in their own agency's preparedness and response programmes.

In accordance with good practice, the Federation had, in fact, included cluster responsibilities in headquarters job descriptions. The speedy arrival in Dhaka of the senior officer and assistant coordinator and the support of the Bangladesh delegation in setting up the SCG were evidence of the Federation's commitment.

SCG staff spoke highly of the support received from the delegation in Dhaka and the field throughout deployment. The BDRCS actively participated in an assessment field visit by the SCG and Early Recovery Cluster. As far as support from Geneva was concerned, those in Bangladesh at the start of response were most satisfied but this early support proved hard to sustain.

> *From my perspective, the Secretariat always responded very well and quickly. [Cluster chair] always seemed to find the time to follow up on our requests.*
>
> *The secretariat is always very supportive when needed.*
>
> *Some decisions in the field are critical but [Geneva staff] sometimes absent. Shouldn't there be somebody on call?*
>
> *Despite the best of intentions of the secretariat staff, we lacked timely feedback to questions/requests. This appeared to be due to uncertainty or requirements to constantly refer to third parties.*

Dedicated support in Geneva would accord with good practice in surge capacity and alliance management.[19] It would also free other staff responsible for the Federation's own response: the dual role of the senior officer in FACT team operations and cluster

activation placed additional pressure on regional response staff. Occasional field visits would provide an opportunity for support, mentoring and monitoring, using the cluster's draft performance management framework. [20]

Duty of care includes end of mission arrangements. ACTED, Care and the Canadian Red Cross provided debriefing for their recruits but most others appeared to have had none. Though SCG staff terms of reference called for end of mission reports, there was no standard form available for staff and the Federation did not follow this up with staff leaving Bangladesh. Perhaps unsurprisingly, four of seven expatriates did not submit reports. In addition to absence of care, this represents loss of organisational learning for the Federation and for the cluster.

2.5   Handover

The Federation's obligations did not extend beyond the emergency phase. It had negotiated a provisional hand-over to UN Habitat on 31 January, with in-principle support from the Federation for ongoing emergency shelter coordination. However, though UN Habitat agreed to this in early January[21] it had insufficient funds to support its role. UN Habitat attributed this mainly to its status - it was not an IASC Cluster Lead Agency. A week before the scheduled handover, UN Habitat told IFRC that it was no longer in a position to assume leadership.

The Federation instead agreed handover to the Early Recovery Cluster led by UNDP. UNDP shelter counterparts were not readily identifiable or available at short notice. The SCG team remained in post until a UNDP coordinator and information manager began work in mid-February. The Federation made arrangements to keep technical adviser and four host country staff in post for a limited period after handover, ensuring a measure of continuity and support for emergency shelter programmes. These staff and the early recovery advisor provided continuity. SCG and UNDP staff had a brief hand-over meeting the day after a jointly chaired SCG meeting on 13 February.

The SCG had started in response to requests from partners in Bangladesh but appeared to stop in response to a decision from Geneva. Partners viewed the Federation as an independent and impartial coordinator in a uniquely complex area of humanitarian assistance. In the absence of clear communication about the SCG's mandate, status and exit strategy some informants were surprised by the seemingly arbitrary date for handover to an agency hitherto little involved in emergency shelter and the SCG.

> *Where does your responsibility end? The Shelter Coordination Group was aware of how big the need was…Then full stop.*

> *We were surprised … when the UNDP handover happened and we were told they were only local clusters.*

Information about a closure or merger should be included in discussions with and literature for country level partners and a 'goodbye' procedure introduced.[22] The Federation should also consider extending its coordination in response to evidence of need at country level.

3. ACTIVITIES

3.1 Strategy

The SCG was slow to lead on strategy development, as both its staff and partners acknowledged. It rightly consulted partners on the Strategic Framework. However, under pressure in the planning phase to frame their agencies' own shelter programmes, submit applications and attend other coordination meetings, partners were slow to participate.

> *What were the weaknesses of the SCG? Slow resolution of clear cluster strategy.*

> *It was clear that agencies wanted more than responsive coordination and instead required that we [SCG staff] were **proactive** in forming a strategy.*

The task was passed to the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). No minutes are available but the group included a smaller number of NGOs, the Federation and USAID. A draft strategic framework was distributed on 15 December 2007, just over one month after the cyclone. SCG operational priorities were emergency and transitional shelter for the most vulnerable, and provision for the largest number of families in the shortest possible time. The government, however, was declaring a move from relief to recovery.[23] With this declaration, donor focus could be expected to move away from emergency shelter.

> *Nobody will fund a plastic sheet once emergency recovery has started.*

A revised template in the online shelter toolkit would help speed up strategic development, ensure coherence between different policy documents and still allow opportunity for consultation.

On 19 December, the first draft of a set of SCG Shelter Programming Recommendations was distributed by the field coordinator. This was intended as an annex to the SCG Strategic Framework: it would assist the cluster in producing 'an agreed set of guidelines and recommendations that both donors and implementers can use in their planning and program development.' [24]

The Shelter Programming Recommendations captured wider discussion in Technical Working Group (TWIG) and coordination meetings in Dhaka and affected areas. It presented options for shelter action, including emergency, transitional and permanent shelter. It included practical advice on 'building back better' to give new shelter of all kinds greater resilience in the face of natural disaster and included information on Sphere standards, costings and early recovery.

The shelter recommendations linked the SCG with early recovery in accordance with its mandate. However, many felt it needed to maintain a clear focus on emergency shelter.

> *When you know you have a disaster like this, you know the houses have gone you must have strong leadership to push for emergency shelter. Don't lose sight of the fact.*

> *There were mixed messages – short-term vs. long-term shelter. The Shelter Cluster didn't reconcile these mixed messages.*

Where, as in Bangladesh, natural disasters are recurrent, shelter recommendations could be augmented by work plan or critical path tools to help in prioritising, scheduling and monitoring shelter options.

Even if strategy and recommendations had been set earlier, the SCG's influence was challenged by factors largely beyond its control.

- Experience of tsunami response was thought to have put development and humanitarian agencies off the complexities of shelter.

- Agencies with development experience in Bangladesh often had a geographic rather than sectoral focus and relied on the capacity of local partners.

- Where permanent shelter had been promised but not delivered, some agencies were prevented by local government or beneficiaries from delivering emergency shelter materials in case housing grants were withheld. [25]

- There was lack of full engagement in the SCG by government and UN though shelter plans required government approval.

These factors highlighted the need for buy-in to humanitarian reform and for assumptions to be clearly stated in SCG strategic planning.

3.2   Communications

The SCG Google groups website was set up on 22 November. It served as notice board, information exchange and resource centre. It provides a record of SCG and some TWIG meetings, *who-what-where* information, strategies, technical information and IEC materials and remains in use. Given the good availability of internet access in Bangladesh, it represented a timely and appropriate contribution to disaster response, early recovery and future preparedness.

However, though easy to access, it does not provide new users with an introduction to the SCG's work nor guide them easily to key messages, discussions and documents, some of which remain in draft form or as attachments to emails. Meeting minutes have inconsistent file names and file formats and sometimes lack attendance names and numbers. Key documents generated by the SCG and partners, for example shelter designs, lack metadata to make it possible to check author, date or status. Important reference documents, such as Sphere chapters, are hard to recognise. There is no link to or from the IASC's Humanitarian Reform website or the Federation's. (A number of the website design issues were addressed in the response to Cyclone Nargis when OCHA set up individual cluster websites as part of the Humanitarian Information Centre.)

During the period under review, those posting most messages were SCG staff, followed by a handful of INGOs. The largest number of messages, 55, was posted in December 2007. However, interviews showed that technical information posted on the website was probably appreciated by a larger number, including those rarely able to attend meetings.

> *I used to check the website. It's very good. The guidelines are very good. We took the information and gave it to masons and carpenters. So it's a free source*

of technical assistance. Information could be accessed even though you were remote.

There appeared to be little printed information about the SCG in English or Bengali. Before activation, when the SCG had to reach key stakeholders, and after roll-out, when it needed to establish visibility and credibility, it had no communications strategy or logo and few materials to explain its role. There was a cost in terms of profile, recognition and good will.

> *A communication strategy should be ready off the shelf and adjusted for the specific context.*

> *I was quite disappointed that our SCG didn't have any handouts, no name banner, posters. We have to prepare things like this beforehand.*

> *The mandate and role [of the SCG] has to be clear and be disseminated.*

> *I found it very frustrating. I could not find the cluster. I kept trying to find the SCG.*

The SCG was called the emergency shelter cluster, shelter working group, shelter cluster working group, shelter coordination team, shelter cluster, the IFRC and the Federation during this review and in written material. The name changed again after handover. The IASC global cluster needs a corporate identity and logo, and should consider preparation, translation and dissemination of information materials.[26] Regional meetings of the Federation would be opportunities to introduce the cluster approach and to develop or review key messages and information. This would assist others in the Federation, including individual delegates, local delegations, national society of the country and other Participating National Societies (PNSs). These frequently had limited knowledge about the cluster approach yet, as members of the Red Cross family were expected to be well-informed about the SCG before, during and after activation and even handover in Bangladesh.

3.3   Information Management

Challenges for the SCG included absence of information management preparedness and unfamiliarity with basic concepts in Bangladesh. The first information manager introduced agency profile and plan templates before the SCG's second meeting. These were posted on the SCG website and revised in January 2008.

Owing to lack of expertise, experience and/or capacity, partners were slow in collating and sharing information. This was an issue not only for the SCG but for other clusters. Successive SCG information staff identified a need for personal approaches, flexibility, and outreach in eliciting and processing data. The second coordinator appointed a Bangladeshi assistant information manager to strengthen this support.

> *Sometimes information was very hard to get. Always people were not willing to give information.*

> *A more proactive and personal approach will yield better results, as well as building trust, avoiding all the problems associated with form-filling.*

Despite these challenges information management was seen as one of the SCG's successes. Approximately fifteen agencies regularly contributed information which the SCG analysed and used to inform advocacy on shelter.

> *The SCG have coordinated information very successfully.*

> *It was one of the things the IFRC-led cluster did best….who-what-where got going early…We needed the cluster's figures… I replicated the tube charts incessantly.*

The Resident Coordinator's request that each cluster have an information management focal point was unprecedented in a cluster response and welcome. In the absence of OCHA, an Information Management Working Group was started by a group of information management professionals including the SCG. The Working Group included WFP, WASH Cluster, UNDP and the government's Disaster Management Information Centre (DMIC). The SCG's role was central both in the short term and, with WASH, in pushing for a Lessons Learned exercise after Cyclone Sidr to inform information management preparedness.

> *[SCG Information Manager] knew what other, similar groups had experienced in other countries. He made strong technical inputs. It helped improve the format of who-what-where stuff and use of e.g. P-Codes and geo-IDs. It has positively contributed to how the information management community is doing things in Bangladesh.*

DMIC and WFP were the prime source of mapping information shared with SCG partners. Successive SCG information staff with good technical and/or local knowledge interacted easily with their government counterparts.

> *The relationship [with] DMIC …was quite strong …. Information was easily shared between us and a comfortable working relationship was made…*

> *It was one of the most open governmental sources I've ever worked with. [There was] little bureaucracy if information was requested.*

With the decision not to deploy OCHA, gaps in inter-cluster analysis were inevitable. For those unfamiliar with humanitarian reform and OCHA's role, the gaps were seen as a failing of the cluster approach. OCHA was requested in 2008 to do a critical review of information management after Sidr and to advise on future use of the Humanitarian Information Centre model in Bangladesh.[27]

3.4   Assessment

Needs assessment started late but the mapping of gaps in shelter response was considered one of the most useful contributions made by the SCG. A field visit to Barisal in early December found evidence of unmet need but, ahead of assessment, could not quantify it. The global cluster was developing a shelter assessment tool as part of a tri-cluster rapid assessment framework but this had not been finalised at the time of Cyclone Sidr. Delayed assessment in turn delayed SCG advocacy and access to some donor funding.

You need to get the evidence early, get your advocacy messages out early, get the money early.

If I had had critical needs documented earlier I could have got a bit more…I was trying to lobby to get more money. It was not until March that I had data.

The SCG joined a needs assessment led by the Early Recovery Cluster in mid-December 2007. The early recovery adviser from UN Habitat coordinated development and use of shelter questionnaires, partly funded the work of ten enumerators, analysed findings and drafted a shelter needs report. Visits to twenty villages in five of the most affected districts, focus groups, and interviews with just over 180 households were carried out. While a majority of families was able to rebuild without assistance, approximately 327,000 families needed help to build transitional shelter. These families required materials and training in cyclone-resistant building techniques. They included the poorest families: those without land tenure or living outside the protection of embankments. [28]
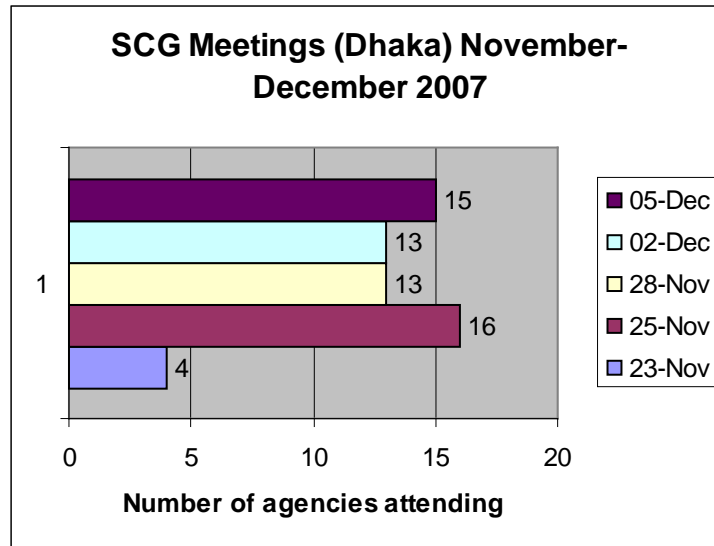
In January an assessment of shelter need at ward level in Barguna by SCG partners attempted to test perceptions by local government of the under-counting of landless and *char* land dwellers. This assessment found the overall picture to be accurate but again highlighted the plight of landless families and those living outside embankments: they had lost more and remained more vulnerable to future disaster. There were also concerns about the need for early recovery measures to support families providing shelter to relatives and neighbours and for those who had lost economic assets such as agricultural and work buildings.

A summary of shelter coverage by the SCG at the end of January 2008 compared government figures on shelter need with known commitments and found that while over 250,000 families had received transitional shelter and commitments for a further 56,000 were in the pipeline, 270,000 still needed transitional shelter and 1.1m household needed technical assistance to build back better. The findings of SCG assessments were shared in coordination meetings and on the SCG website. They informed reports, advocacy and funding requests. Concerns about the landless resulted in advocacy by UN Habitat with government and the establishment of a second TWIG in February 2008.

3.5   Coordination

Coordination meetings

Coordination meetings started in Dhaka on 23 November and were held at UNICEF, UNDP or the Disaster Management Bureau. Minutes do not always record attendance but early meetings in Dhaka involved about fourteen agencies, mainly international NGOs, half of which attended regularly (See Annex C).

SCG Meetings (Dhaka) November-December 2007

Chart legend:
- 05-Dec
- 02-Dec
- 28-Nov
- 25-Nov
- 23-Nov

Values: 15, 13, 13, 16, 4

X-axis: Number of agencies attending (0, 5, 10, 15, 20)

A shelter SAG was formed. SCG staff attended meetings of the WASH Cluster SAG and the WASH Cluster attended shelter meetings when possible. Relations between the two clusters were good. They attempted to ensure programmes dovetailed so that shelter would not be provided without a latrine or vice versa; the SCG's ward level assessment in Barguna included a question about tube wells. Regular meetings were held to brief the Head of Delegation on SCG activities.

UNDP had emphasised that the government should lead response to Cyclone Sidr and the SCG endorsed this view in activation discussions. However, while government focal points for some clusters were easily identified, shelter was a harder match.[29] Bangladesh did not have an emergency shelter strategy and the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management did not have responsibility for housing. The SCG's government focal point and co-chair was director general of the Ministry's Disaster Management Bureau. He also chaired a number of other coordinating bodies, including the Early Recovery Cluster, hence seldom had time to participate in SCG meetings. Alternative ways of accessing and engaging counterparts should have been a priority not only for the SCG but for the Resident Coordinator. If not, concerns that the cluster approach would create a 'parallel structure,' separate from government, became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Federation-led SCG brought dedicated human resources to help fill technical and coordination gaps in a sector where material losses were greatest and issues complex. Its 'products', data and innovations were cited and adopted and its work appreciated. Yet, like other clusters, it remained a forum utilised with apparent reluctance by government and UN.

> *It was a good forum for sharing information. But participation by decision-making organisations, particularly government, was minimal. They tried to bring government in – but this was lacking in other clusters too.*

> *The clusters themselves were not utilised either by the government or by UN agencies …as a space for genuine policy discussions around actual needs on the ground.* [30]

External agencies should coordinate themselves. The government has its own coordination structure.

TWIG meetings

TWIG meetings started a week after SCG meetings in Dhaka. Habitat for Humanity International provided a regular Dhaka venue where approximately six agencies attended meetings between 29 November 2007 and 8 January 2008 according to minutes (see Annex C). The TWIG became the forum for reviewing shelter recommendations, sharing information on shelter materials and technical solutions, and comparing costings and designs. In February 2008 a second TWIG started, focusing on the needs of landless families.

TWIG meetings were useful but there was concern about slow progress in collating designs and an absence of IEC materials. Shelter designs of all kinds by SCG members and those that emerged from TWIG meetings also required central government approval. Approval and endorsement of transitional shelter designs did not come until after SCG handover to UNDP. By then, however, the SCG's Bengali shelter booklet and principles were seen by many informants as a major contribution to shelter, early recovery and preparedness.

It was very good to talk to colleagues re shelter. You can share ideas. It stops you reinventing the wheel.

If you are distributing CI sheeting in a cyclone area you must have some key messages Use the radio. Use posters. Nobody got out these messages.

The most problematic area [was] agreeing the technical design of the shelter. All stakeholders were pulling in different directions.
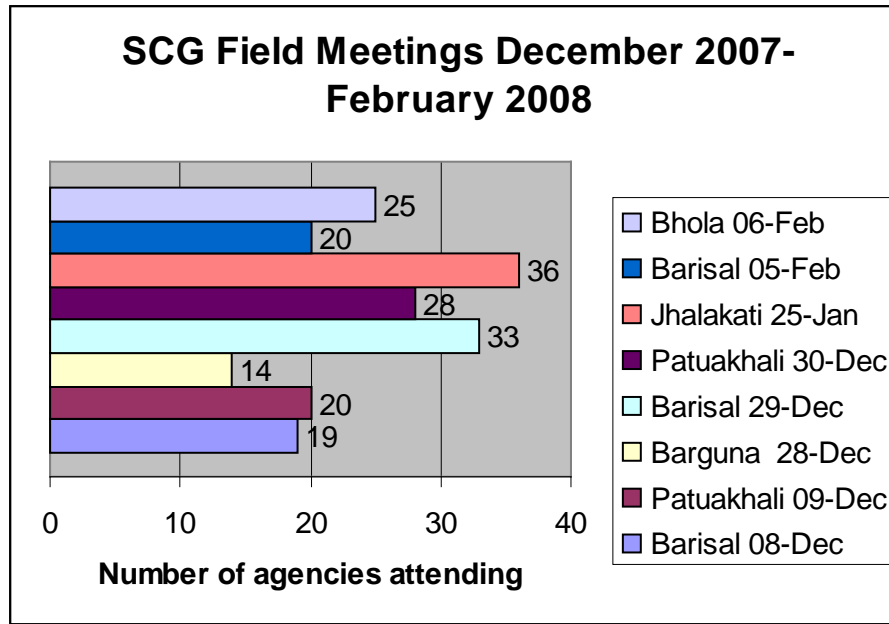
Field meetings

With the arrival of the field coordinator in Dhaka on 5 December, coordination and technical meetings began in cyclone-affected areas. The first were organised in association with Oxfam, local government and local NGOs, including South Asia Partnership, Uttaran and Saint. Minutes do not always record attendance but, where known, the range was 14-36 agencies.

There were lines out of the door to attend the meeting. They saw us as a source of funds, a way to promote themselves to donors and the larger NGOs.

Initially, some saw the cluster approach primarily as a means to secure funds. Some informants in Dhaka saw field meetings as attracting 'brief-case' NGOs or too-junior representatives. Though this may have been the case at the start, expectations were clarified. Meetings also included local government representatives and established NGOs.

A coordination structure was established at divisional and district levels with a local NGO as focal point in each. Divisional meetings were held in Barisal and district meetings in Bagerhat, Barguna, Bhola, Jhalakati and Patuakhali. On 30 January the

SCG decided to focus on field meetings and reduce the frequency of Dhaka meetings. Most informants wished local coordination had started sooner and been maintained after handover. The field coordinator was seen as dedicated and inspirational and the work of the SCG' national and international staff and partners helped fill gaps in public information and coordination that were still evident at the time of this review.

SCG Field Meetings December 2007-February 2008

	Number of agencies attending
Bhola 06-Feb	25
Barisal 05-Feb	20
Jhalakati 25-Jan	36
Patuakhali 30-Dec	28
Barisal 29-Dec	33
Barguna 28-Dec	14
Patuakhali 09-Dec	20
Barisal 08-Dec	19

3.6   Advocacy

Government and media messages had emphasised the relatively small number of deaths due to Cyclone Sidr but not the relatively large number of survivors. Advocacy was included in SCG job descriptions but not in the strategic framework. On 21 December 2007, a month after the cyclone and a week after government declared the emergency phase over, the SCG drafted a press release, issued by the Federation in Geneva, which sought to re-focus attention on still unmet needs.

> *I've never seen such a widespread disaster to which the response was so meek. People said that disasters in Bangladesh are cyclical… Only one-sixth of those households affected were helped.*

> *I supported the December press release. .. There were four times more houses destroyed than in Pakistan. I don't understand why there was so little attention to this emergency…You don't measure the disaster by the number of dead. It was a cluster that should have beaten the drum louder.*

The press release followed the SCG's first field visits and was agreed at a shelter coordination meeting in Dhaka. It appealed for emergency and transitional shelter for

180,000 families who were facing the winter under makeshift shelter of reclaimed or storm-damaged materials.[31] The UN-only IASC meeting a day earlier was concerned to *'paint a positive picture of UN work in Sidr humanitarian response and early recovery.'*[32] Despite humanitarian reform, there seemed to be no higher level coordination body able to amplify messages or question a funding imbalance that, to quote one informant, meant a homeless family could get a toilet before it got a house.

Oxfam International saw role conflict on advocacy as symptomatic of the 'double-hatted' Resident Coordinator-Humanitarian Coordinator post.

> *The UN Resident Coordinator's office and the United Nations Development Programme displayed a (perhaps inherent) resistance towards assuming a more independent and impartial humanitarian leadership and advocacy role.* [33]

Information on shelter, as assessed by the SCG and its members, was included in a report for the government published in February 2008. [34] In its Early Recovery Framework, the UN adopted SCG's messages on meeting shelter needs before the monsoon and its recommendations on transitional shelter provision. UNDP used the SCG's figures in fundraising with DFID.

USAID supported the SCG advocacy's role and in 2008 provided an additional $2m for shelter. Oxfam increased its emergency shelter assistance and continued to lend advocacy expertise to the SCG which started an advocacy working group after handover in February. UNDP used SCG figures on outstanding need in applications to DFID which contributed an additional £2m for shelter and livelihoods in March 2008.[35]

Significant funding gaps remained however. The SCG developed a second press release in April 2008. This drew attention to the fact that pledges of assistance from all sources left 260,000 families without the means to rebuild their homes. Many homes rebuilt did not incorporate cyclone resistant techniques, rendering them potentially unsafe in the monsoon season.

The UN in Bangladesh decided it did not wish to issue or endorse the press release though the country level cluster was now led by UNDP and its revised terms of reference and work plan included advocacy[36] and media lobbying.[37] The Resident Coordinator's Office explained its decision by reference to the cluster's status in Bangladesh: '*there was no global activisation* [sic] *of the cluster system. There is, for example, no provider of the last resort.'* [38] On 14 April 2008, in its capacity as global Emergency Shelter Cluster lead, the Federation in Geneva issued the press release on behalf of the SCG.[39]

Some thought the IFRC-led SCG should also have done more to campaign on landlessness, an issue on which its strategic framework and shelter recommendations gave conflicting messages. In February 2008 TWIG meetings on the situation of the landless and the need for release of government-owned *khas* land and other measures began, chaired by UN Habitat.

3.7   Training

On 15 December, in response to a suggestion from Muslim Aid, a practical workshop on building cyclone-resistant shelter was conducted in Barisal. This was organised with

Oxfam and attended by approximately 50 participants, including representatives from the UN, Federation, BDRCS and NGOs.[40]

On 7 February the SCG held a one-day workshop in Barisal, funded by the Federation. It was organised and facilitated by expatriate volunteers and a shelter consultant, and attracted 90 participants. It was held in Bengali and English. In the morning participants from NGOs, PNSs, environmental organisations and private firms reviewed a draft of 'Timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations' and the SCG's shelter programming recommendations. The afternoon focused on use of timber and other materials in shelter construction/reconstruction in Bangladesh. The government's Forestry Department presented legal issues in use of timber. Oxfam presented a session on community mobilization and shelter training.

Learning points and recommendations were summarised in the workshop report for follow-up. Recommendations covered

- Knowledge of Bangladesh forestry regulations and international standards (only seven participants had heard of Sphere)
- Increased consultation and participation by local communities in shelter projects
- International and national sourcing of timber in view of the scale of need
- Continuing ban on timber extraction from protected Sunderbans forest
- Use and limits of fallen timber in emergency shelter
- Three months' deadline for emergency shelter provision ahead of the monsoon
- Need for further training, and a timber TWIG [41]

Stronger messages on Health & Safety would accord with Do No Harm, construction safety and the draft communications strategy. Stronger messaging was particularly important when unfamiliar construction materials and techniques were introduced. Explicit Health & Safety messages should augment future training, IEC and material provision in future deployments.

3.8   Application of standards

In its Strategic Framework and on its website the SCG referenced a number of international standards and good practice guidelines. These included Sphere's standards on shelter, and guidance on plastic sheeting and transitional shelter. The SCG's Recommendations on Shelter combined international standards and locally agreed good practice in a table of guidelines, for example Sphere shelter dimensions, and local guidance on shelter location (on the land side of embankments). Sphere standards and forestry regulations informed the timber workshop at Barisal.

In addition to technical standards, the strategic framework included references to the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* and IASC's gender handbook. Reference could also have been made to Sphere's cross-cutting Chapter 1, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership's

principles (available in Bengali),[42] the ECB's field guide to impact and accountability in emergencies and the Global Humanitarian Platform's Principles of Partnership (available in Bengali).[43]

The SCG helped the government set a standard for transitional/core shelter in Bangladesh. Specifications, principles and its Bengali language booklet were finalised, published with financial support from UNDP and endorsed by the government after handover.

> *The Shelter Coordination Group did a good job. It developed a core shelter design for the first time in Bangladesh. They developed the book.*

Agencies complained that Sphere standards on shelter dimensions met with resistance from donors and UNDP as the cost of core shelter increased. This was reflected in shelter specifications issued by the SCG after handover. Informants in two agencies also thought that SCG shelter designs should have explicitly reflected the rights and needs of disabled people, in line with national building regulations.

> *This design doesn't represent the needs of disabled people. ... There is a building code in Bangladesh that says all buildings should be accessible for disabled people.*

To have contributed to a first Bangladeshi standard on core shelter was a considerable achievement by the SCG. Its work also highlighted the need for ongoing advocacy on Sphere and other international standards in Bangladesh and underlined the need for input by government on national regulations and codes.

3.9 Cross-cutting issues

The cluster approach included a number of themes that cut across the work of the eleven clusters. These themes included environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and age. [44] Different organisations, including the Federation, also identify other cross-cutting themes of particular importance in their own work, for example, protection.

Though job descriptions refer to the promotion of cross-cutting themes, there is little evidence of concerted attention to them in SCG documents reviewed. The Strategic Framework directs readers to the IASC gender guidelines and handbook but neither the framework nor Shelter Programming Recommendations make more than cursory reference to gender and shelter, and none at all to HIV/AIDS. The draft communications strategy does not reference to cross-cutting issues nor do minutes of most coordination and TWIG meetings. The Guiding Principles for Shelter Recovery, developed after handover, emphasise the need to mainstream gender sensitivity in shelter but not environmental considerations.

Focus groups and household interviews conducted as part of the shelter needs assessment in December involved almost twice many men as women because, as the assessment report acknowledged, only male interviewers were hired. Questions did not explicitly consider gender issues, for example shelter needs of female-headed households, and responses were not disaggregated in the report.[45] As in other clusters, cross-cutting issues such as gender received limited attention. In the case of the

Federation-led SCG, an opportunity was lost to build on cyclone preparedness work by the BDRCS.

> *It is very essential to involve women and children in responses…These are remote areas where communications are poor. Sometimes the males are going out but the women are staying in the house. Nobody came to talk to me, not Federation, not cluster. I have a lot of recommendations.*
>
> *Cross-cutting issues like gender and protection (for example the protection needs of female- and child-headed households living with relatives or host families) appear to have fallen through the cracks as clusters have limited themselves to discussing the more technical and practical aspects of the response.[46]*

SCG partners and stakeholders almost certainly had information to share on these issues. Handicap International had access to resources on construction and disability. Care Bangladesh conducted an assessment of gender response in Sidr programmes following research in December. [47] The BDRCS's Building Community Disaster Preparedness Capacity Project, supported by three PNSs and the European Community, had an active gender component and a network of both male and female volunteers covering the area affected by the cyclone.

Shelter designs incorporated Sphere standards and graphics used by the SCG included images of women builders. However, given low levels of awareness on Sphere and gender, messages from cluster and Federation partners would have benefited from consistent reinforcement by the SCG.

Sustainability of different shelter materials was considered, albeit briefly, in the Shelter Programming Recommendations. However, government messages on environmental protection, notably that of the Sunderbans rainforest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a source of sustainable livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of people, were articulated and reinforced at the SCG's Timber Workshop in January.[48] This workshop involved the Government of Bangladesh's Forestry Department, responsible for maintaining the site and protecting it from logging and the extraction of fallen timber.

Annex A   Cluster activation guidance

March 2006

In a circular, the IASC advises that clusters can be activated at national level: 'at the request of any IASC agency (UN as well as non UN) in the field or in the HQs' in response to 'dramatic events or disasters; to fill major gaps in humanitarian needs, identified by the agencies and by the hosting Government; by initiative and guidance of the concerned Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators in consultation with the Country Team members.'[49]

May 2006

An IASC Guidance Note sees national clusters as part of country-level contingency planning. Decisions on national clusters established, lead agencies designated and the terminology used to describe clusters are the responsibility of the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator in consultation with local government and global cluster leads. [50]

May 2007

Guidance on Designating Sector/Cluster Leads in Major New Emergencies reaffirms IASC agreement that the cluster approach will be used in 'all responses to major new emergencies.' It defines a 'major new emergency' as '*any situation where humanitarian needs are of a sufficiently large scale and complexity that significant external assistance and resources are required, and where a multi-sectoral response is needed with the engagement of a wide range of international humanitarian actors.*'

A Standard Operating Procedure states that the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator will consult the national government and in-country IASC members on the clusters – now termed 'clusters/sectors' or 'sectoral groups' – to be activated, and which agencies will lead them. The Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator will forward a list to the Emergency Response Coordinator who will consult global cluster lead agencies before communicating a decision to global clusters and the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator. S/he will communicate this decision to government and country level partners.[51]

November 2007

The Rome Statement on Cluster Roll-Out returns to the language of 'clusters.' It re-states the IASC's agreement that the cluster approach would be the framework for response in major new emergencies. However, it also emphasizes the primary responsibility of national governments in leading humanitarian response and the duty of international actors, including clusters, to support national government and build on local capacity. [52]

November 2007

Revised IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines, incorporating the cluster approach, are endorsed by an IASC Working Group on 5 November. These see the involvement of particular 'sectors/clusters' in contingency planning as a local decision on which global cluster lead agencies are consulted.[53]

Annex B   Timeline

2007	Event
15 November	• Cyclone Sidr strikes.
17 November	• Bangladesh delegation and Federation in Geneva receive requests for emergency shelter guidance and leadership.
18 November	• IFRC Shelter Department senior officer arrives in Dhaka to a) join Federation FACT team, b) advise Bangladesh delegation on cluster deployment, c) advise Federation cluster chair on situation
19 November	• Senior officer and Head of Delegation discuss Federation response and clusters with UNDP. UNDP advises that Government of Bangladesh has some coordination capacity, but is unfamiliar with cluster approach and reluctant to bring in foreigners. Resident Coordinator will issue final decision following discussion with government. Federation agrees clusters should not create a parallel system but build on local capacity.[54]
20 November	• Senior officer informs Federation cluster chair that Bangladesh delegation and BDRCS have approved deployment of a shelter team informally to coordinate shelter by the Red Cross family, NGOs and government. However, Resident Coordinator has yet to confirm formal cluster activation.
22 November	• Senior officer meets Resident Coordinator who says that either formal or informal activation of cluster is possible [55] • Federation cluster chair decides to deploy 'Shelter Working Group' • SCG Assistant Coordinator (1) arrives in Bangladesh to set up office, logistics and communications • Googlegroups website set up
23 November	• First meeting of the 'Shelter Coordination Group' held
24 November	• SCG Coordinator (1) and SCG Information Manager (1) arrive in Bangladesh.
25 November	• Senior officer leaves to represent Secretariat in workshop in Indonesia

26 November	• United Nations Emergency Response Coordinator confirms the following clusters and lead agencies for the humanitarian response:
	
	    Food WFP
	    Logistics WFP
	    WASH UNICEF
	    Emergency Shelter IFRC
	    Health WHO
	    Early Recovery UNDP
	
	No objections received within 24 hour deadline.

29 November	• Cluster Lead Agency forwards ERC email to global Shelter Cluster and to Federation in Geneva and Bangladesh. Advises that UN Habitat will send an expert to support shelter transition and longer term settlement needs • UN Habitat advises UN Resident Coordinator it will deploy an expert in support of the SCG and Early Recovery Clusters in Bangladesh.
30 November	• In light of forthcoming UN Habitat mission, Resident Coordinator advises SCG Coordinator and UNDP in Bangladesh that clusters have not been activated globally and are not driven by international protocols.
01 December	• SCG Technical Advisor arrives in Bangladesh.
02 December	• Federation senior officer returns to Bangladesh for a week

05 December	▪ SCG Field Coordinator arrives in Bangladesh ▪ UN Habitat Early Recovery Adviser arrives in Bangladesh to support SCG and Early Recover Cluster
08 December	▪ Field Coordinator, Technical Adviser and Oxfam visit Barisal district and hold first SCG/TWIG meetings with government and NGOs in affected areas ▪ SCG Assistant Coordinator (1) leaves Bangladesh.
12 December	▪ Early Recovery Needs assessment starts. Includes SCG participation
13 December	▪ Government of Bangladesh declares emergency phase over
14 December	▪ SCG Bangladeshi Field Assistant starts work
15 December	▪ Draft SCG Strategic Framework distributed ▪ Workshop on cyclone resistant housing held in Barisal
18 December	▪ Early Recovery Needs assessment ends
19 December	▪ Field Coordinator's report on Barisal findings presented at SCG meeting ▪ First draft of Field Coordinator's Shelter Recommendations document (annex to Strategic Framework) presented at SCG meeting ▪ SCG field assistant
20 December	▪ SCG Coordinator (1) leaves Bangladesh ▪ SCG Information Manager (1) leaves Bangladesh
21 December	▪ Federation cluster chair asks UN Habitat to take over SCG leadership from 31 January 2008. Offers in-principle support for funding of personnel and emergency shelter needs after this date. ▪ SCG Information Manager (2) starts work
	▪ UN Habitat SCG Early Recovery Adviser leaves Bangladesh
27 December	▪ Second draft SCG Shelter Programming Recommendations distributed
30 December	▪ SCG draft IEC materials distributed
2008	
06 January	▪ UN Habitat agrees to take over SCG.
10 January	▪ Global Shelter Cluster acknowledges UN Habitat decision. ▪ SCG Coordinator (2) arrives in Bangladesh
22 January	▪ SCG Barguna ward-level assessment starts (6 days)
24 January	▪ UN Habitat tells IFRC that it is not in a position to assume SCG lead responsibilities. UNDP asks IFRC to continue coordination of the SCG for a limited time.
29 January	▪ SCG Summary of Shelter Coverage in Response to Cyclone Sidr distributed ▪ SCG Bangladeshi Assistant Information Manager starts work
31 January	▪ SCG Information Manager (2) due to end contract ▪ SCG is formally handed over to UNDP but, in absence of counterparts, Federation continues to coordinate
08 February	▪ UN Habitat Early Recovery Adviser returns to Bangladesh
09 February	▪ SCG Coordinator (2) due to end contract ▪ SCG Field Assistant (1) due to end contract
11 February	▪ Federation cluster chair informs SCG partners of handover from 31 January to UNDP
13 February	▪ SCG coordination meeting is co-chaired by outgoing Federation and incoming UNDP coordinators ▪ Barguna ward level assessment findings presented
14 February	▪ SCG Field Coordinator due to end contract ▪ Handover meeting between Federation and UNDP coordination teams

Annex C Agencies attending early SCG meetings in Dhaka

23-Nov	25-Nov	28-Nov	02-Dec	05-Dec
		ACF		
		ACTED		ACTED
			BDRCS	
	CARE	CARE		CARE
	Christian Aid	Christian Aid		Christian Aid
	Concern	Concern	Concern	Concern
		CRS		
	Food for the Hungry	Food for the Hungry		Food for the Hungry
		Friendship	Friendship	
				GoB DMB
				GoB PWD
		Habitat for Humanity		Habitat for Humanity
			Handicap International	
	HAP			
				Heed Bangladesh
IFRC	IFRC	IFRC	IFRC	IFRC
		IMC	IMC	
		IOM	IOM	IOM
			Logistics Cluster	
Islamic Relief	Islamic Relief			
Muslim Aid	Muslim Aid		Muslim Aid	MuslimAid
Oxfam	Oxfam	Oxfam	Oxfam	
				Plan International
				Première Urgence
	Save the Children		Save the Children	Save the Children
	Solidarités			
			Spanish Red Cross	
	Swiss ADC			
UNDP	UNDP	UNDP		
	USAID	USAID	USAID	
	WFP			
	WVI			

Agencies attending early TWIG meetings in Dhaka

29-Nov	03-Dec	06-Dec	08-Jan
ACTED			
			Care
		CRS	
			Dept of Civil Engineering
Friendship	Friendship	Friendship	
Habitat for Humanity	Habitat for Humanity	Habitat for Humanity	Habitat for Humanity
		HEED	
	IFRC FACT		
			Muslim Aid
Oxfam GB		Oxfam GB	Oxfam GB
			UDS
USAID	USAID	USAID	
World Vision	World Vision		

Annex D   Informants

AFM Shahidur	Rahman	Head, Livelihoods Security and Risk Reduction Sector	ActionAid Bangladesh
Sajid	Raihan	Associate Coordinator-Risk Reduction,	ActionAid Bangladesh
K H Masud	Siddiqui	Director General, Disaster Management Bureau	Bangladesh Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
Babul	Alam	Secretary General, Bagerhat	BDRCS
M. Shafiul	Alam	Secretary General	BDRCS
Mustofa	Kamal	Deputy Secretary General	BDRCS
Sabina	Yasmin	Junior Assistant Director and Gender Specialist, Building Community Disaster Preparedness Capacity Project	BDRCS
Lizzie	Babister	Shelter and Reconstruction Senior Specialist	CARE International UK
Suman SMA	Islam	Humanitarian assistance coordinator	CARE Bangladesh
Md. Mizanur	Rahman	Adviser (Infrastructure)	CARE Bangladesh
Ian	Rector	Chief Technical Adviser and Team Leader	CDMP / UNOPS Bangladesh
Mahmadul	Islam	Senior Project Expert (Training and Preparedness)	CDMP / UNDP Bangladesh
Mizanur	Rahman	Adviser (Infrastrsucture)	Concern Bangladesh
M A	Wahed	Senior Adviser, Disaster & Environment Management Unit	Concern Bangladesh
Johny M	Sarkar	Livelihoods Adviser	DFID Bangladesh
David	Hill	Head of Office	ECHO Bangladesh
Abdul	Awar	Programme Officer	ECHO Bangladesh
Tushar	Wali	Country Director Bangladesh	Handicap International
Antoine	Barbier	Emergency Field Programme Manager	Handicap International
Finn	Rude	Resident Representative	ICRC Bangladesh
Kaat	Boon	Shelter Delegate	IFRC Bangladesh delegation
Nelson	Castano	Regional Disaster Management Coordinator / FACT	IFRC South Asia Regional delegation
Simon	Eccleshall	Senior Officer Recovery Operations	IFRC Secretariat Geneva
Selvaratnam	Sinnadurai	Head of Delegation	IFRC Bangladesh delegation
Shail	Shrestha	Programme Coordinator	IFRC Bangladesh delegation
Laily	Khan Majlish	Administrative Officer, Gender Focal Point	IFRC Bangladesh delegation
Graham	Saunders	Emergency Shelter Cluster Chair / Head of Shelter	IFRC Secretariat Geneva
Miguel	Urquia	Senior Officer, Shelter Alliances and Operational Support	IFRC Secretariat Geneva
Nurul Amin	Bagmer	Programme Manager EDP	Islamic Relief Bangladesh

Jamie	McGoldrick	Chief, Humanitarian Reform Support Unit	OCHA Geneva
Joseph	Arulmari		Oxfam GB Bangladesh
Abdus	Sobhan	PHS Area team leader, Bagerhat area	Oxfam GB Bangladesh
Nicki	Bennett	Humanitarian Policy Adviser	Oxfam GB
Rumana	Kabir	Shelter Consultant	Oxfam GB
Joseph	Ashmore	Shelter Consultant	SCG / IFRC
Neil	Bauman	Information Manager	SCG / IFRC
Dave	Hodgkins	Field Coordinator	SCG / IFRC
Malcolm	Johnstone	Assistant Coordinator	SCG / IFRC
Md. Shakil	Khan	Assistant Information Manager	SCG / IFRC
Bernard	Laliberté	Coordinator	SCG / Canadian Red Cross
Lucien	Lefcourt	Information Manager	SCG / ACTED
Gregg	McDonald	Coordinator	SCG / RedR Australia
Sanjay	Mukherjee	Technical Adviser	SCG / Care India
Mujahidur	Rahman	Field Assistant	SCG / IFRC
Mariko	Sato	Early Recovery Adviser	SCG / Early Recovery Cluster / UN Habitat
Cristina	Lopez Fuentes	Delegate	Spanish Red Cross
Md	Tarik-ul-Islam	Assistant Country Director (Disaster Management)	UNDP Bangladesh
BMM Mozarul	Huq	Advisor Humanitarian Response Team; Coordinator, Shelter Working Group	UNDP Bangladesh
Steven	Goldfinch	Programme Officer, Shelter Working Group	UNDP Bangladesh
Rune Dige	Brandrup	UN Programme Officer	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator Bangladesh
Jan	Kellett	Coordination Specialist	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator Bangladesh
Sue B.	Macintyre	Regional Advisor, South Asia, OFDA	USAID Sri Lanka
James	Shepherd-Barron	Coordinator	WASH Cluster Bangladesh
John	McHarris	Programme Advisor	WFP Bangladesh

Annex E   Review terms of reference

Terms of Reference for:
A Review of the Bangladesh Cyclone Sidr Response 2007-2008
IFRC-led Shelter Coordination Group

Background to the Bangladesh Cyclone Shelter Coordination Group Review
Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between IFRC and UN OCHA[56],

> "subject to available resources, constitutional limits, and the rules and regulations of the Federation, the Federation will assume a coordination role for emergency shelter in specific emergency operations within an agreed coordination system".

Cyclone Sidr struck the southern shore of Bangladesh on the 15th November. The extremely high winds and wave surge caused significant damage across the poorest and most vulnerable regions of Bangladesh. The private housing sector is recognised as suffering the most damage in the wake of the cyclone.

Figures provided by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) indicate that more than 8.5 million people in 30 districts were affected. Total damage is estimated at US 1.6 billion dollars with approximately 50% of this coming from the housing sector.

In the initial aftermath of the cyclone, discussions regarding the use of the cluster approach to support the Government's coordination and response were held, led by the UN Resident Coordinator and involving representatives from leading agencies including global cluster leads. In response to information and coordination requests from operational shelter agencies in Bangladesh and at the global level, the International Federation in consultation with its in-country representatives agreed to deploy a Shelter Coordination Team on 21st November 2007[57].

The IFRC-led Shelter Coordination Team comprised a Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Information Manager and Technical Advisor, plus administrative support. In keeping with the aspirations of IFRC to promote a interagency coordination team to reflect the interagency participation in the cluster, agreements were reached with Care UK, Acted and Red R Australia to second coordination team staff with funding from IFRC. UN Habitat were also formally requested to undertake the role of focal agency for early recovery and longer term settlement programming and related issues.

In accordance with the commitment of IFRC to coordinate emergency shelter and not transitional or permanent, in January 2008 discussions were held to agree the handover of coordination responsibilities from IFRC to UN Habitat. In late January 2008, UN Habitat reported that they would not be able to adequately resource such a role, and recommended that UNDP take on this responsibility. Formal handover from IFRC to UNDP was agreed and detailed in a handover document[58]. As part of IFRC's commitment to addressing ongoing emergency shelter needs, IFRC agreed to continue to provide capacity to the Shelter Coordination Team to follow-up on emergency shelter issues (as detailed in the handover document)

Objective of the Bangladesh Cyclone Shelter Coordination Group (SCG) Review

The objectives of the SCG review are to:
1. appraise the service provided by the International Federation as shelter cluster coordinator to shelter cluster participants – Government, UN agencies, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (Bangladesh Red Crescent, IFRC, ICRC as appropriate), NGOs both national and international, and other actors;
2. appraise the service provided by the shelter cluster as a whole to meeting the needs of the households affected by the disaster;
3. review and analyse the experience of the International Federation with respect to the establishment and operation of the SCG, with a particular emphasis on lessons to be learnt for future operations;
4. provide recommendations with regard to the International Federation's leadership of future emergency shelter cluster coordination activities at both national and global levels.
5. examine if there were aspects of the Federation's cluster leadership which potentially might have or actually did compromise the mandate and principles of the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Scope of the Review

The review will encompass, but not be limited to, the following areas:
- The activation of the cluster process and the extent of involvement and influence of the Federation, as an IASC member, in the decision-making process;
- the understanding and support of the Federation's shelter coordination role within the in country delegation, the region and Geneva;
- the impact of the SCG on the Federation Delegation, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, and other operational Red Cross Red Crescent Societies;
- the design and implementation of the SCG, including factors and determinants which provided the SCG's strengths and weaknesses;
- the value of linking and/or separating the SCG and the Red Cross relief operation;
- the design and implementation of the exit/handover strategy;
- relations with other clusters, the UN system and the Government;
- the staffing of the SCG and the support provided from the Secretariat;
- the equipping and funding of the SCG;
- the involvement of the SCG in the transition from meeting emergency shelter needs to permanent housing and resettlement;
- issues with regard to visibility for the International Federation and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

Methodology

The methodology employed by the reviewer/s in gathering and assessing information should include:
- A field visit to Dhaka;
- Review of available documented materials relating to the start-up, planning, implementation, and impact of the SCG (reference to the SCG Google/email group and website);

- Interviews with key internal stakeholders within the Secretariat in Geneva, (by 'phone) with IFRC Delegation in Dhaka, the IFRC Field Assessment & Coordination Team (FACT), the Bangladesh Red Crescent, IFRC regional representatives, and other operational Red Cross Red Crescent Societies;
- Interviews with other key stakeholders, in particular Government officials where possible;
- Interviews with UN OCHA and the UN RC's office;
- Interviews with shelter agencies participating in the SCG, and in particular UN Habitat and IOM;
- Interviews with shelter agencies who second staff to the SCG regarding this arrangement, including Care UK, Acted and RedR Australia;
- If feasible, interviews with beneficiaries (beneficiary perceptions regarding the extent to which the shelter response and the cluster approach is fulfilling their needs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in planning processes).

Note: A suggested list of interviewees will be provided separately.

Proposed Timeline
The exercise will be implemented over a period from 21 days between 17th September and 30th April, the start date subject to agreement with the IFRC Delegation in Dhaka.

Outputs
1. Concise, written document with key recommendations and supporting information. This document should be of use for discussing the IFRC experiences of the cluster process internally and also with key donors and other stakeholders.
2. Additional notes, summaries of interviews etc. as appropriate, or supporting documentation.
3. Summary of review activities undertaken, including interviews, visits, documents reviewed etc.

Key reference documents to be provided:
1. IFRC-UN OCHA Shelter MoU
2. IFRC Shelter Coordination Group ToRs
3. Email to Global Emergency Cluster informing on the deployment of the SCG
4. SCG Handover document IFRC-UNDP January 2008
5. All documents (meeting minutes, strategy documents etc.) available from the SCG website or otherwise on request.
6. Reviews of IFRC-led shelter cluster coordination in Pakistan (floods 2007) and the Philippines (typhoon 2006)

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