



## **Global Shelter Cluster Overview of Efforts to Improve Environmental Outcomes**

### **GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER CORE MANDATE WHO WE ARE?**

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The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordination mechanism that supports people affected by disasters and people affected by conflict-induced internal displacement to live in safe, dignified, and appropriate shelter and is co-chaired by IFRC and UNHCR at the global level. The GSC enables better coordination among shelter actors, including local and national governments, so that people who need shelter assistance receive timely and appropriate support.



## **WHY ARE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS KEY FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS ASSISTANCE?**

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Humanitarian shelter responses require a rapid and large mobilization of shelter and construction materials as well Essential Household Items (EHI)/Non-Food Items (NFI) to meet lifesaving and life-supporting needs. Unfortunately, shelter and settlements responses risk having the highest level of negative environmental impacts in a humanitarian response, including the frequent use of plastics and of materials which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). To tackle this issue, the GSC has strengthened its focus to advance and support partners to reduce negative environmental impacts of shelter responses and consider climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Shelter is among the primary need in many crises contexts and shelter constructions as well as the increased number of people living in one area enhance the risk of the overuse of natural resources and environmental assets such as land, water, or timber (among others).



## GLOBAL SHELTER CLUSTER (GSC) GREENING EFFORTS

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Since 2021, the Global Shelter Cluster's greening efforts have been financially supported by ECHO, USAID-BHA, UNHCR, IFRC and other partners, underlining the collective efforts towards achieving greener humanitarian shelter and settlements responses. The GSC, among other activities that are being implemented both at country and global level, has:



Advocated for a stronger inclusion of environment and climate-change considerations, reducing CO2 footprints, and reducing the use of virgin plastic in shelter response planning and implementation.



Established an Environment Community of Practice, which has, over the last 10 years provided specialized technical expertise, tools, and trainings to country and global partners



Contributed, through its partners, to the development of global environmental standards, including the Sphere Environmental Sustainability Shelter Standard 7



Played a key role in developing and connecting greening initiatives in the shelter programs of lead agencies and global partners.

Overall, the GSC Environmental Community of Practice reiterated focus on environmental considerations helps to advance towards reducing the negative impacts of shelter assistance, incorporating a wide range of activities which shelter partners have and can further undertake, building upon the many tools and guidance already existing.



Guidance and tools available include:

- Assessments tools such as [NEAT+](#), [SMAC](#) and [Checklists](#) for including environmental considerations (aligned with the Sphere Standards);
- Analysis on the scope of environment and climate change integration in the key strategic documents produced by Shelter Clusters such as [HNOs and HRPs](#); or an overview on greening [procurement](#) practices for humanitarian organisations;
- Guidance on mainstreaming environmental and climate change considerations in the Humanitarian Program Cycle such as the [Tip-Sheets](#); and on reducing plastics in [packaging](#);
- Other processes and outputs include [country specific environmental, and shelter response profiles, as well as many other tools and guidance.](#)

The Global Shelter Cluster is also strengthening capacity of country clusters and local partners on mainstreaming environmental considerations into their programming through in-person and/or remote trainings, including on environmental assessment tools. Through partnerships with CRAterre, WWF and CRS, the GSC is supporting country-level shelter clusters to effectively design and implement “greener” shelter responses, through contextual research feeding into [Shelter Response Profiles](#), Environment Country Profiles, and innovative Market-Based approaches.

Recently, and aligned with the [Climate and Environment Charter](#) for Humanitarian Organizations, the GSC and its partners have agreed to even stronger coordinate and advocate for the reduction of negative environmental impacts among its partners through a joint statement.

The GSC will continuously support countries clusters as well as global partners through research, coordination, and advocacy to achieve this vision as well as many other topics, that will help to make humanitarian shelter responses more environmentally sustainable. In the upcoming GSC strategy (2023-2027), a strong focus will be on “Greener Shelter and Settlement responses” that incorporate climate-smart approaches to reduce the environmental impact and increase community resilience.

*For more on GSC greening efforts, get in touch with us on [environmentoperations@sheltercluster.org](mailto:environmentoperations@sheltercluster.org) or visit our [website](#)*