

Guidance Note from the Global Shelter Cluster on HRP Project-based, Activity/Unit-based, and Hybrid Approaches

The guidance note was developed by the Global Shelter Cluster in 2023 to guide Shelter Cluster Coordination teams on the HRP project-based, activity-based, or hybrid approaches. The guidance note is structured as follows:

1. HRP in brief and key definitions
2. Project-based HRP
3. Activity/unit-based HRP
4. Hybrid method HRP
5. Annexes

1. HRP in brief

The [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#) is a strategic document that presents the response plan of the humanitarian community according to the needs identified in the HNO (Humanitarian Needs Overview). It includes an overall strategic response section, a response monitoring section, and a sectoral/Cluster section which quantifies the number of people targeted, the funding required per sector, and partners' capacity and coverage to respond. The HRP is developed collectively with operational partners with the guidance and support of OCHA and Clusters. It is used for advocacy purposes and fundraising, and it is also used to monitor the progress of the proposed plan, the target, and the funding requested. [OCHA HRP Costing Methodology Options](#) present three main methodologies for estimating target and funding requirements:

- 1. Project-based HRP** (more details on page 2)
A project-based HRP is a response plan developed based on projects submitted by Cluster partners.
- 2. Activity or unit-based HRP** (more details on page 4)
An activity-based (also sometimes called unit-based) HRP, is a response plan developed by the Cluster coordination team with input from the Cluster partners, where the targeted population and budget requested for the sector is based on estimations of partners' response capacity and agreed activity costs.
- 3. Hybrid methodology** (more details on page 7)
A hybrid approach is a combination of both methodologies described above. There have been different ways of combining both approaches to define the targeted population and budget requested.

The Cluster Coordinator should negotiate the HRP timeline at the ICCG and ensure that the HNO is completed and published before initiating the HRP process. This will also allow Cluster Coordinators to elaborate on sectoral objectives and define activities, geographical focus, and priorities based on the HNO. This will ensure that the proposed response is evidence-based and that partners can prepare projects based on the HNO.

2. Project based HRP

A project-based HRP is a response plan developed based on projects submitted by Cluster partners. Clusters first determine their cluster objectives and key activities, linked to the strategic objectives, these then serve as the basis for partners' project development. The targeted population and budget requested for the sector are based on projects submitted by partners and selected by a vetting/selection committee, based on Strategic Objectives agreed at the inter-cluster level and the strategic direction defined by the Cluster's SAG or partners. The projects selected form the basis of the HRP numbers (target population and budget requested) although the Cluster coordination team will make some adjustments to ensure there are no duplications.

The challenge of the Project-based HRP is that it demands a lot of time and detailed input from partners through their project submission. The overall process is somewhat more time-consuming than an activity-based HRP for the Cluster coordination team and those involved in the project vetting committee.

The advantages are that a Project-based HRP is defined and owned by the Cluster partners who contribute actively to the process through their project submission. It also provides visibility to a diversity of partners, especially smaller actors when their projects are selected in the HRP.

a. Chronology

The timeline below presents a chronology of events and tasks which will be carried out during the HRP process:

	Work stream	Focal points
1	Once the HNO process is finalised the HRP process will start	ICCG & HCT
2	Development of HRP Sector Objectives, Results Framework, Protection Risk Mapping, Environmental and Gender and GBV considerations, etc	Cluster & SAG
3	Initiate drafting of HRP Sector Chapter	Cluster
4	Announcement of the opening of the HPC Project Module	OCHA and Clusters
5	Cluster Coordinators share with partners HRP Sector Objectives, Results Framework, and other key guidance	Cluster
6	Define the composition of the Project vetting committee based on agreed criteria	Cluster
7	Partners submit projects on HPC Project Module platform	Partners
8	Project review / vetting by committee at the hub level and national level	Clusters & review committees
9	Partners make amendments on their submitted projects based on review committee feedback	Partners
10	Final vetting and selection of projects	Clusters & review committees
11	Finalise sector chapter with final target and cost estimate	Cluster
12	Submit sector chapter for sector defence	Cluster

b. Development of Sector Objectives, Results Framework

The Shelter Cluster team with the SAG and partners will develop and agree on key guidance and objectives for partners to submit their projects, which can include priority geographical

location. Based on those, the Cluster team will initiate the drafting of the HRP chapter, which includes:

- Sector objectives that will be in line with the ICCG Strategic Objectives
- Shelter Cluster Results framework, developed by the Cluster team based on the Strategic Objectives, will be a key reference for Cluster partners when developing their project submission(s) and will ensure their activities are aligned with the Cluster's Strategy and the HNO
- Protection Risk Analysis (including Gender and GBV)
- Environment risk analysis
- Vetting criteria

Examples of HRP chapters can be found here:

[Sudan 2023 revision](#)

[République Démocratique du Congo 2022](#), page 19

[Venezuela 2022](#), page 34

c. Project submission

OCHA will announce the opening of the project submission phase in HPC Tools so that partners can submit their projects, using the guidance from each Cluster. The Shelter Cluster Coordinator will provide specific guidance to partners on the criteria for submission and selection, including the sector's objectives and key guidance mentioned above.

Example of sector guidance:

- There will be only one single submission per organisation per sector
- The project submission should not be based on a single project or donors, but rather include in that one submission all the programmatic and activities intended for the sector
- Avoid duplication and consult with implementing organisations/ donor agencies to ensure that only one actor submits the project
- In the case of merged Shelter and CCCM Clusters, the narrative can be combined for Shelter and CCCM, however the proposal should reflect the funding allocated to Shelter and to CCCM separately, including the sector specific indicators
- Integrated project components or considerations should be mentioned briefly in the project summary
- Unless advised otherwise at country level, there will not be multi-sector submissions

d. Project vetting committee

The Cluster team will have to define the project vetting committee members to review the project submissions. OCHA will provide guidance on the committee structure and the Cluster team with its partners will agree collectively on the vetting committee members. The committee includes a balanced combination of UN agencies, INGOs, and NNGOs (and government when relevant). The Cluster team will be facilitating the vetting committee, guiding the process with the support of OCHA. Often the Cluster team will have veto power in the selection process but will not have normal voting power. This should be agreed with the OCHA CBPF team as it may vary from country to country.

The vetting committee members will review the projects based on predefined vetting criteria, which includes, amongst others, the alignment to the Cluster strategy and priorities, targets, vulnerability criteria, detailed activities, proposed budget, and coherence. The

committee will receive an Excel document with the list of criteria and guidance on how to score each section, based on the Cluster standards. This Excel document is provided by OCHA to the Cluster team and should be adapted to the context, priorities, and standards.

The vetting committee will provide consolidated and agreed-upon feedback to pre-selected projects. The pre-selected projects will be able to adjust their proposals based on the feedback and the vetting committee will make their final decision and validate the agreed projects for the HRP.

e. Finalising the HRP chapter

With the projects selected, the Cluster team will have to prepare the final HRP sector chapter, including the final estimation of people targeted and the budget requested. The target and budget will not be only a summation of the targets and budgets of the selected project, some adjustments will have to be made to avoid duplications. These figures will be presented by the National Cluster Coordinator at the HC and HCT for final validation through a Cluster defense meeting.

3. Activity/Unit based HRP

An activity-based (also sometimes called unit-based) HRP, is a response plan developed by the Cluster coordination team with input from the Cluster partners, where the targeted population and budget requested for the sector is based on estimations and consultation of partners' response capacity and agreed activity costs.

- (1) An estimation from the Cluster team based on an analysis of previous years, funding received, partners' response capacity, the humanitarian trends, and the unit cost of activities per household, as well as agreed operational costs.
- (2) Consultation of partners' shelter response intentions (target, capacity, access, and budget); this does not include any project submission or submission from partners.

The challenges of an activity-based HRP are that partners are not directly involved in the process of defining the target and budget requested. The Cluster teams are responsible and accountable for developing the target and estimated budget requirements, and to do so effectively they need to actively involve partners and the SAG to ensure buy-in and support from partners on the proposed figures and process. Since this approach is based on an agreed cost per activity and an average overhead cost, organizations that have higher overhead costs maybe be penalized by the cost-standardization approach.

The advantages of this approach are that the process is less heavy on the Cluster team and partners since there is no project submission or vetting process. The Cluster team has more agency and flexibility when defining the target and budget for the sector, based on cost per activity, the humanitarian trends, and the capacity of the sector.

a. Chronology

The timeline below presents a chronology of events and tasks which will be carried out during the HRP process:

	Work stream	Focal points
1	Once the HNO process is finalised the HRP process will start	ICCG & HCT
2	Agree on average cost per activity and average operational cost across all sectors	Cluster, SAG & partners
3	Analysis from previous years, estimation and consultation of partners shelter response intensions (target, capacity, access, and budget)	Cluster & partners
4	First estimation on target and budget to be presented to the SAG and Cluster partners for discussion	Cluster, SAG and Partners
5	Review of target and budget figures based on SAG and partner feedback and development of HRP Sector Objectives, Results Framework, Protection Risk Mapping, Environmental and Gender and GBV considerations, etc	Cluster & SAG
6	Presentation of HRP target and budget to all Cluster partners for final validation	Cluster
7	Finalize sector chapter with final target and cost estimate	Cluster
8	Submit sector chapter for sector defence	Cluster

b. Average unit cost per activity

The Shelter Cluster with the SAG and partners need to agree on the average unit cost per activity (e.g., distribution/construction of emergency shelter 150 USD, transitional shelter 800 USD, shelter repair 300 USD, etc.). Each activity also needs to be clearly defined to ensure all partners respond with the same quality for each activity with a harmonized cost. The cost per activity may vary from hub to hub depending on the country's geography and local market prices, and the Cluster team may have to use a hub approach to define the target and budget requirement when the cost varies geographically. The Cluster will also need to agree with the SAG on a standard operational cost for each activity (for transport, warehousing, and in-country staff) and the Cluster will need to agree at the Inter-Cluster level if overhead costs (other staffing and admin costs) should be included and have a harmonized approach with all sectors.

c. Partner consultation

The Cluster team will consult partners to collect their response intentions for the new HRP cycle. A blank Results Framework table should be shared to collect these intentions to understand partners' shelter budgets, the type of activities they intend to carry out, and their operational and access capacity. The results of these consultations should be shared during the regular Cluster meetings to present back to the partner the overall Clusters intentions and justify the Cluster team's estimated target and budget requirements.

d. Cluster analysis estimation

The Cluster team will triangulate several analyses to estimate the population target and budget requirement using the following three approaches:

- (1) Yearly trend analysis of PIN, target, reached, and funding requested and received
- (2) Estimation of target and budget based on an analysis of the new PIN and an indicative percentage of people type/location targeted in past years
- (3) Partner response intention and agreed on average unit cost per activity

1. Yearly analysis and humanitarian trends

A yearly based analysis allows the Cluster to have an overview of the PIN, target, and budget requests and achievements over the years. In the table below, the Cluster team can assume

there will be a reduction of the target and budget based on a reduction of the PIN figure for 2022, as well as a low achievement of the target population reached in 2021.

Table 1. Yearly analysis (using dummy figures)

Year	PIN		Target		Reached		Budget \$	
			% compared with previous years		in numbers & %		% compared with previous years	
2019	400K		100K		70K	70%	3,6 M	
2020	450K	12,5%	120K	20%	80K	66%	4,5 M	25%
Rev 2020 (Covid)	600K	33%	400K	200%	140K	35%	10 M	122%
2021	600K	0%	200K	-50 %	140K	35%	7 M	-30%

2. Estimation of target and budget projection per activities

The Cluster team can estimate a target and budget based on the new PIN and an indicative percentage of people targeted/reached in past years in each activity. The table below shows that when 500,000 people need emergency shelter at \$150 in camps and 30% of those people are targeted with an emergency shelter response that will cost \$4.5M.

Table 2. Target and budget estimation on activity projections (using dummy figures)

Type of population	Type of Shelter activity & average cost per household		PIN people	Target people		Budget (considering a household of 5)
				%	Number	
IDPs living in camps	Emergency Shelter	\$150	500,000	30%	150,000	$(150,000/5) \times 150 = 4,500,000$
IDPs living in rental accommodation	Cash for rent for 6 months	\$1500	10,000	25%	2,500	$(2,500/5) \times 1,500 = 750,000$
Returnees living in damaged house	Shelter Repair package	\$400	5,000	50%	2,500	$(2,500/5) \times 400 = 200,000$
TOTAL			515,000		155,000	\$5,450,000

3. Partners' intentions:

Partners' response intentions can be collected and analyzed against the Clusters agreed average unit cost per activity. For example, in the table below, the Cluster collected three partners' intentions which include a UN agency commitment to provide 20,000 families with emergency shelters and 200 families with cash for rent for 6 months, an International NGO commitment to provide 8,000 families with emergency shelters and 300 families with cash for rent for 6 months and a National NGO commitment to provide 2,000 families with emergency shelters and 2,500 families with shelter repair packages.

Table 3. Partners' intentions (using dummy data)

Type of population	Type of Shelter activity & average cost \$		# Families targeted by partners	# People targeted	Budget
IDPs living in camps	Emergency Shelter	150	UN 20K INGO 8K, NNGO 2K	(30K x 5) = 150,000	30K X 150= 4,500,000
IDPs living in rental accommodation	Cash for rent for 6 months	1500	UN 200 INGO 300	(500 x 5) = 2,500	500 X 1,500= 750,000
Returnee living in damaged house	Shelter Repair package	400	NNGO 2,500	(2,5Kx 5) = 12,500	2,500 X400 = 1,000,000
TOTAL				165,000	\$6,250,000

4. Example of triangulation of analysis:

The table below is a compilation of the target and budgets from the 3 analyses above. The table indicates that the target figures should be between 200K and 165K and the budget should be less than 7M and between 5,45 and 6,35M.

1. Yearly Analysis		2. Estimation projection / activity		3. Estimation per partner intention	
Target	Budget	Target	Budget	Target	Budget
> 200K	> 7M	155 K	5,45 M	165 K	6,35 M

e. Finalise HRP Chapter

Based on the partner consultation and the Cluster estimation, the Cluster team will present the proposed HRP figures to Cluster partners and SAG for their validation. This will allow the Cluster team to develop the HRP chapter and present the final target and budget to the HC and HCT for the "Cluster defense meeting".

4. Hybrid based HRP

A hybrid approach is a combination of both methodologies described above. There have been different ways of combining both approaches to define the targeted population and budget requested.

- Delayed project planning: in this approach, the Cluster team prepares a rough unit-based target and costing which is updated at a later stage with the project-based costing and replaces the unit-based target and budget figures.
- Marketplace approach: in this approach, the unit-based method defines the target and budget requirement for the HRP. The projects presented by partners are considered as plans or expressions of interest and there is no fixed timeline for uploading projects, it provides partners with more visibility than an Activity/Unit-based HRP.

A hybrid approach is often used when there is no consensus at the ICCG or HCT or when the country HPC cycle maybe is delayed but there is a HQ request for figures to be submitted for the Global Humanitarian Overview launch.

The challenges of a hybrid approach are that the approach is more time-consuming since it essentially requires the Cluster and its partners to repeat both approaches. The hybrid approach does not recommend one specific approach for defining the target and budget, although the most common approach uses the unit-based approach and sometimes figures are updated with the project-based approach at a later stage. The Cluster should agree with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and HCT if the “Delayed project planning” or “Marketplace approach” will be prioritized.

a. Chronology

The timeline below presents a chronology of events and tasks which will be carried out during the HRP process, this may vary depending on whether the Hybrid approach is a Delayed project planning or a Marketplace approach:

	Work stream	Focal points
1	Once the HNO process is finalised the HRP process will start	ICCG & HCT
2	Agree at the Inter-Cluster level and HCT if using a <i>Delayed project planning</i> or <i>Marketplace approach</i> to define the target and budget	ICCG & HCT
3	Agree on average cost per activity at the Cluster level and average operational cost across all sectors	Cluster, SAG & ICCG
4	Analysis from previous years, estimation, and consultation of partners shelter response intensions (target, capacity, access, and budget)	Cluster & partners
5	First estimation on target and budget based to be presented to the SAG and Cluster partners for discussion	Cluster, SAG and Partners
6	Review of target and budget figures based on SAG and partner feedback and development of HRP Sector Objectives, Results Framework, Protection Risk Mapping, Environmental and Gender and GBV considerations, etc	Cluster & SAG
7	Announcement of the opening of the HPC Project Module	OCHA and Clusters
8	Cluster Coordinators share with partners HRP Sector Objectives, Results Framework, and other key guidance	Cluster
9	Define the composition of the Project vetting committee based on agreed criteria	Cluster
10	Partners submit projects on HPC Module platform	Partners
11	Project review / vetting by committee at the hub level and national level	Clusters & review committees
12	Partners make amendments on their submitted projects based on review committee feedback	Partners
13	Final vetting and selection of projects	Clusters & review committees
14	Presentation of HRP target and budget to all Cluster partners for final validation	Cluster
15	Finalize sector chapter with final target and cost estimate	Cluster
16	Submit sector chapter for sector defence	Cluster

b. Finalise HRP Chapter

Based on the type of Hybrid approach (Delayed project planning or a Marketplace approach), the Cluster team will follow the steps detailed in the Project or Activity/Unit based section detailed above to estimate the figures and prepare the HRP sector chapter to present to the HC and HCT for the Cluster defense.

5. Conclusion

The three methodologies presented in this document are the most used approaches in an HPC cycle to define the target and budget ask for each Cluster. With the ongoing IASC review, these methodologies may change and evolve, so this is a living document that will be updated with upcoming changes to the HPC.

Annex 1 - General guidance & documentation on HRP process

- [Global Shelter Cluster – Information management toolkit](#)
This page includes examples from different countries' HRP project vetting processes and analyses.
- [OCHA HPC](#)
This package includes a step-by-step guide to developing the HRP as well as templates.
- [OCHA – HRP Costing Methodology options](#)
This document includes detailed guidance from OCHA on the costing approaches.

Annex 2 – Example of vetting criteria for Project-based HRP

General criteria for all sectors:

1. Have humanitarian objectives and be in line with humanitarian principles.
2. Be based on needs assessment or evidence-based needs analysis if dedicated needs assessments are not available.
3. Be in line with the HRP's overall strategic priorities and objectives; as well as with the relevant sector/cluster response plan and related objectives/ activities.
4. Target the most vulnerable groups as identified in the HNO, in both the inter-sector and sector chapters.
5. Target areas of high severity of needs as identified in the HNO (sector-specific severity areas complemented by inter-sector severity areas).
6. Meet the relevant sector/cluster response strategy, criteria, standards, and guidance (which will be shared separately by sector coordinators).
7. Planned activities should be realistically achievable within the implementation period.
8. Demonstrated access to identified locations.
9. Include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism/capacity, including targets in line with the sector framework, and commit to 4W reporting.
10. Include a Protection Risk Analysis, including [mitigating gender-based violence](#), and a self-assessment against the three distinct markers: (a) [the Gender with Age Marker \(GAM\)](#), (b) [the Resilience Marker](#) and (c) [PSEA](#).
11. Reflect realistic targets and proportionate funding requirements.
12. The project is submitted by a partner that participates in existing cluster/sector coordination mechanisms.
13. The project reflects funding trends (funding requested/ received in previous years) and the operational capacity of the partner.

Specific criteria for Shelter Cluster:

1. Be a participating member of the National and/or Hub Shelter Cluster
2. Must be in line with the Country Cluster Strategy and include:
 - a. Environmental Risk Analysis – see [HRP Tip-sheet on Environment and Climate Change](#)
 - b. HLP risk analysis and in country requirements – see [HLP Resource page](#)

3. Must have reported “implemented activities” to the country cluster 4Ws.
4. Must include the offline SNFI key info vetting sheet and log frame by email.
5. Must be realistic both in target and budget based on your reported capacity during the previous year.
6. Budget submission must be cost-efficient and in line with standard sector activity costs.