

## GSC Damage Assessment Technical Sub-CoP inaugural meeting Meeting Notes – 28/08/2025 (detailed)

---

**Date** : 28 August 2025 - 13:00-13:015 (Geneva Time) - online

**Participants** : 44 participants

**Facilitator** : Pascal Panosetti GSC Technical CoP moderator and the Damage Assessment T.S-CoP committee members (Arnold, Heba, Chathu, Mamuney, Regina, Noor)

**Recording** : <https://youtu.be/7tPn89IkZls> [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

### Summary:

The inaugural meeting of the GSC Technical Sub-CoP on Damage Assessment was held online on August 28, 2025, with 44 participants joining. The meeting introduced the T.Sub-CoP, presented the Terms of Reference, shared topics survey results, and facilitated a plenary discussion on expectations and future directions.

### Key Decisions:

- Quarterly webinars will be held, with the next scheduled for October 2025 and December/January
- Topics for future webinars will be selected based on survey results and ongoing crises (e.g., Gaza, Ukraine).
- Subgroups may be formed to support country-specific damage assessment efforts (e.g., Gaza, Ukraine).
- Members are encouraged to share tools, resources, and complete the extended Damage Assessments Topics Survey by September 3.
- Participants shall create a GSC accounts and follow the GSC Technical CoP and the Technical Toolkit pages to receive automatic regular updates.

### Action Points:

1. Share existing tools and resources with the Sub-CoP committee for inclusion in the Technical Toolkit.
2. Complete the [Damage Assessments Topics Survey](#) by **September 3, 2025**.
3. Express interest in joining the committee by submitting a brief statement.
4. Participate in upcoming webinars and discussions.
5. Create GSC accounts on [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org) and follow the [Technical Community of Practice](#) and the [Technical Toolkit](#) pages.
6. Consider forming a subgroup for Damage Assessment in the Whatsapp Shelter & Settlements community
  - o Circulate follow-up survey.
7. Consider forming subgroups to support damage assessment and other technical component for Gaza and Ukraine
  - o Circulate follow-up survey to gauge member's interest.
8. Circulate follow-up survey to gauge preferred meeting frequency
9. Encourage holistic damage assessment approaches that include social and environmental impacts, using case studies to identify overlaps.
10. Develop simple assessment tools to help residents understand risks when sheltering in unsafe buildings (e.g., Gaza, Ukraine).

### 1. Objectives of the Meeting

- Introduce the Damage Assessment Technical Sub-Community of Practice (Sub-CoP).

- Present the Terms of Reference (ToR).
- Share results of the topic survey.
- Facilitate plenary discussion on expectations, suggestions, and future directions.
- Outline next steps and any other business.

## 2. Introduction of the D.A. T.S-CoP Committee Members

- Pascal Panosetti – GSC Global Focal Point for Technical Coordination – committee chair
- Arnold Njogu from UNDP, Regina Wenk from the SDC, Chathu Jayakody & Heba Iskandarani from the Birmingham University, William Rogers-Tizard and Noor Kuchai from Radar UK – Co-chairs with expertise in shelter programming, research, structural engineering, urban planning, and post-conflict and disaster reconstruction.
- All committee emails can be found on the [Damage Assessment - T.Sub-CoP](#) webpage

## 3. Overview of the Technical Sub-CoP

- Presented by Pascal Panosetti.

### Launch & Activation:

- Technical Community of Practice (CoP) launched in **October**, became active in **April** with partner support and volunteers to chair and co-chair the technical theme sub-groups.

### Structure & Thematics:

- **Merged groups:**

- Good construction practice & Build Back Better → merged with Durable, Permanent Durable Shelter & Housing.
- Emergency/temporary shelter specifications → merged with NFI & Essential Household Items.

- **Standalone thematics:** Greener Shelter, Fire Safety.

- Links with other CoPs:

- Good Construction Practice ↔ [Recovery CoP](#)
- Greener Shelter ↔ [Environment CoP](#).

- Damage Assessment has **no direct links** to other CoPs (to avoid duplication).

### Membership & Co-chairs:

- 32 co-chairs from diverse organizations: NGOs, Red Cross Movement, SDC, private sector, and academia.

### Pages & Resources:

- **Technical CoP page:**

- Publishes meeting recordings, PowerPoint presentations, events, and news.
- Members who register receive automatic updates.

- **Technical Toolkit page:**

- Dedicated to publishing resources (not on T.CoP page).
- Includes thematic categories, with existing resources on damage assessment.
- Community invited to contribute tools/resources to expand content for wider use by shelter practitioners.

## 4. Presentation of Terms of Reference

**Terms of Reference (ToR):** Available on website and in PDF format.

### Background:

- Voluntary community focused on technical aspects of shelter & settlements, with emphasis on damage assessment.
- Open to all individuals, regardless of agency/affiliation.
- Collaborative and diverse group of experts (engineers, academics, practitioners).

### **Purpose & Values:**

- Provide accurate, timely data on destruction to guide priorities and resources.
- Inform planning and implementation of shelter solutions.
- Address immediate needs while supporting long-term recovery and resilience.
- Involve local experts to ensure context-appropriate and sustainable responses.

### **Objectives & Scope:**

- Collaborative platform to share knowledge, resources, and technical support.
- Connects individuals from private sector, academia, NGOs, donors, and agencies.
- Promote accurate, efficient damage assessment methodologies.
- Key objectives:
  - Provide guidance across contexts (flood, earthquake, conflict).
  - Strengthen technical capacity.
  - Promote collaboration and coordination.
  - Collect, develop, and share tools/resources via GCSE Technical Toolkit.
  - Advocate for context-specific approaches.
  - Support country-level shelter clusters in assessments.

### **Membership Responsibilities:**

- Contribute knowledge, experiences, and resources (tools, designs, research, documents).
- Engage actively in meetings, webinars, and discussions.
- Participate in thematic presentations and subgroups.

### **Co-chairing Responsibilities:**

- Shared leadership model (all members act as co-chairs).
- Lead bi-weekly meetings to define topics, ToR, and work plans.
- Facilitate and co-organize meetings/webinars.
- Review, validate, and endorse shared resources.

### **Participation & Access:**

- Members encouraged to create a **GSC account**
- Resources available on the Technical CoP and Toolkit webpages.
- Toolkit updated monthly/bi-monthly

## **5. Survey Results Presentation**

- Presented by Arnold Njogu.

**Objective:** Gather community input on relevant topics to shape future discussions, webinars, and interactions.

**Participation:** 65 colleagues responded, providing a clear picture of community priorities.

### **Top Priorities (main topics):**

- *Assessment methodologies* - 75% & *classification standards* – 75% (top priority, call for harmonized/standardized approach).
- *Capacity building & training* – 68% (focus on applying standards and methods).
- *Application of results, technology for data collection/mapping, and data management/reporting* – 54%.
- *Coordination & stakeholder engagement* – 31%.

### Subtopics (top 10):

- Development of guidelines, templates, and SOPs – 69%.
- Rapid/detailed assessments – 62%.
- Structural vs. non-structural assessments – high demand.
- Common terminology (54%) and alignment with national/international frameworks (52%).
- Training to integrate guidelines/standards into practice.
- Interest in technology (remote sensing, drones, GIS, AI) as supporting tools.

### Emerging Themes (open-ended responses):

- Standardized guidance, tools, and methodologies (nearly 50% mentioned).
- Knowledge sharing & learning (best practices, lessons from field).
- Collaboration & interoperability (aligned frameworks, improved coordination).
- Practical applications & case studies (context-specific, e.g., Gaza, Burkina Faso).
- Some skepticism noted about organizational capacity for accurate assessments.

### Community Recommendations:

- Clarify goals and target users of damage assessments (immediate risk, forensic, reconstruction, public vs. specialists).
- Enhance knowledge-sharing platforms (resource hub, meeting recordings, online forums).
- Provide training & capacity building (regular trainings, case-based webinars, especially in complex contexts).
- Strengthen collaboration & engagement (quarterly meetings, joint assessments, involvement of private sector experts, partnerships).

**Overall feedback:** Highly positive; members expressed gratitude and appreciation for the initiative.

## 6. Plenary Discussion Highlights

- Tom Corsellis raised the need for building physics in conflict contexts.
  - He noted the lack of humanitarian shelter guidance for conflicts compared to natural disasters. They highlighted the absence of fundamental building physics for blast and fire, unlike well-developed sciences for earthquakes, floods, and storms. The key question raised was whether this initiative offers opportunities to collaborate with academics and engineers to develop such knowledge, including a severity scale similar to the [Mercalli intensity scale](#), to better address multi-hazard contexts
- John Wain suggested using Gaza and Ukraine as a real-time case study into future technical meetings
  - John suggested incorporating real-time case studies into technical meetings to make discussions more practical and relevant. Gaza was mentioned as a potential example, with a proposal to bring in expert advice to focus on key issues for damage assessments in ongoing crises.
- Regina Wenk and Dave Hodgkin discussed structural assessment differences between blast and seismic damage.
  - Regina Wenk share her experience during a mission in Beirut after the blast with a small FTC team, conducting structural assessments with local engineers and architects. Unlike earthquakes, the blast did not involve aftershocks or seismic effects. Most damage affected older stone buildings or frame structures where non-structural elements were blown out. While the context differs, the structural assessment process was similar, with the absence of aftershocks considered a positive factor
  - Dave Hodgkin noted that while structural damage may appear similar across disasters, the impacts vary depending on building type and the nature of the event (e.g., directional missile strikes, drone

- attacks, vertical blasts, or earthquakes). Drawing on field experience with structural engineers, they emphasized that earthquakes typically cause widespread structural damage, while blasts can create localized, directional effects. Beyond technical aspects, Dave raised a broader concern about the future of humanitarian response: many countries now have their own disaster management laws, agencies, and regulations, limiting the role of foreign responders. At the same time, funding for humanitarian work is shrinking, meaning external actors will likely support only a small portion of affected populations, with most recovery being self-led. The challenge for the committee is to ensure its work remains relevant by supporting national systems, addressing resource constraints, and finding ways to impact the majority of people affected by disasters rather than just a small fraction.
- Emphasis on habitability over structural classification.
  - Sobia Kapadia and others highlighted the importance of integrating social, economic, and environmental impacts.
    - o Sobia emphasized the need to move beyond technical/structural silos in damage assessments and to consider broader social and environmental impacts. They supported using case studies (e.g., Ukraine, Gaza) to better understand overlaps and map needs at the societal level, fostering a more integrated and holistic approach
  - Bill Flinn stressed the need for simple, community-level assessments for unsafe sheltering contexts, particularly concerning Gaza.
    - o **Bill** highlighted the challenge of people in Gaza and similar contexts sheltering in unsafe buildings as the only viable option, stressing the need for simple, non-technical assessment methods to inform residents of risks and possible mitigation. He noted that dangers extend beyond structural issues to include immediate hazards (e.g., missing barriers, falling windows) affecting vulnerable groups.
    - o **Dave** reinforced the importance of simple, accessible assessment tools to help residents in unsafe shelters understand risks and mitigation options, emphasizing both structural and immediate safety concerns for vulnerable populations
    - o Pascal agreed on the need to support populations in Gaza and Ukraine living in unsafe buildings by developing simple criteria for risk awareness. He suggested collecting and sharing existing materials to include in the toolkit and with the cluster.
  - Pascal noted that meeting frequency is flexible and community-driven. While quarterly webinars on tools and case studies are planned, additional meetings (monthly or need-based) can be organized depending on member interest, with possible focus areas such as Gaza or Ukraine.

## 7. Next Steps and reminder

- **Next Webinars:** Planned for October, then December/January.
- **Topics/Subtopics:** Overlapping suggestions will be grouped into thematic areas, with ongoing case studies included.
- **Focus Areas:** Structural damage (context-specific, considering laws/regulations), plus social, economic, and environmental impacts.
- **Member Involvement:** Collect members' interest to present; gather tools/resources to publish in the Technical Toolkit.
- **Survey Deadline:** Extended to **3rd September** – members encouraged to respond to guide planning.
- **Resources:** Important links shared; Technical Toolkit contains useful resources and will be regularly updated.
- Members encouraged to **create an account on the Global Shelter Cluster website** (personal email acceptable) to follow the Technical CoP and receive automatic updates.

- Following without an account is possible but limits visibility of actual membership (currently 51 visible vs. 121 real members).
- Creating an account also allows members to **follow the Technical Toolkit** and receive updates on all resources across the seven thematic areas, not just damage assessment.

### 8. Closing Remarks

- Damage assessment is complex with many topics; quarterly meetings will prioritize based on survey results.
- Possible creation of **sub-groups** (e.g., Gaza, Ukraine, or others) depending on members' interests.
- Members encouraged to **subscribe with an account** to join discussion threads and receive updates.
- Considering a **WhatsApp group** under the Global Shelter network for easier exchanges on damage assessment (feedback welcome).
- Invitation to join the **committee**—members can apply by sending a short note explaining their interest, expertise and added value.
- Meeting recording, the presentation and meeting notes to be shared via the GSC Technical CoP webpage under the Damage Assessment T-Sub-CoP page.

### 9. D.A. T.S-CoP important links :

[Technical Community of Practice](#)

- [Damage Assessment - T.Sub-CoP.](#)

[Technical Toolkit](#)

- [Damage Assessment Resources.](#)

[ToR Damage Assessment Technical Sub-CoP - V1](#)

-