

## **GSC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)**

### **Meeting Notes – 27/02/2025**

**Date:** 27 February 2025

**Participants:** Impact Initiatives (Giulia Montisci), CARE International (Step Haiselden), DRC (Chiara Jasna Vaccaro), InterAction (Juli King), UNHCR (Francesca Coloni), Australian Red Cross (Leeanne Marshall), IFRC (Ela Serdaroglu), IOM (Carolina Cordero-Scales), CRS (Eva Maria Suarez Castro), NRC (Amelia Rule), Habitat for Humanity (Mario Flores), GSC (Seki Hirano, Caroline Dewast, Mamen Sancha, Audrey Gallecier, Heleen Elenbaas)

**Excused or Absent:**

#### **Agenda:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>
	<b>1</b>	Acknowledgement of InterAction and Partners
	<b>2</b>	Impact of Stop Work Order (SWO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Summary of all partners meeting</li><li>- GCCG survey results</li></ul>
	<b>3</b>	Fundraising strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rules of Engagement to fundraise on behalf of the cluster</li><li>- Strengthening Partner engagement beyond the SAG</li></ul>
	<b>4</b>	Readout IASC principles / EDG meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Transitioning 7-11 clusters</li></ul>
	<b>5</b>	Discussion on ways forward for the cluster <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- WG and CoP</li><li>- GSC support team functions</li><li>- Annual meeting</li><li>- HNPW</li></ul>

#### **Summary of action points:**

**Waiver survey:** SAG to determine whether to proceed with the additional questionnaire on waivers consider termination letters. If appropriate GSC to review the additional waive questionnaire and consult SAG for next steps if any.

**Discussion on efficiencies measures:** Several SAG members volunteering to be part of the mini-SAG to continue discussion on efficiencies measures. Awaiting ERC communication after the principles meeting. IOM, IFRC, UNHCR expressed their interest in participating others interested, please to contact Seki.

**Durable solutions working group ToR:** IOM has submitted a durable solutions WG activity proposal, IOM and UNHCR to discuss how this connects with the solutions Hub. Accordingly, a call will be scheduled. During the call, NRC, CRS, Habitat for Humanity and CARE expressed their interest in participating. The rest of interested, please to contact Seki.

#### **1. Acknowledgement of InterAction and partner's updates**

##### **1.1 Acknowledgement of InterAction**

This was the last meeting for InterAction as a SAG member. GSC members expressed gratitude, a card was shared that reflects InterAction's commitment to the sector. Multiple SAG members echoed this and mentioned that Juli and Hilmi will be thoroughly missed.

##### **1.2 Partners update**

**IMPACT:** Severe staffing cuts in the team in Geneva as well at the country level. Of the three people from IMPACT that worked together with the Shelter Cluster, two of them are transitioning

out, the third will transition to a different role. IMPACT Global Shelter portfolio will be significantly reduced. IMPACT has received some termination letters from USG, some country offices are significantly scaled down and some risk closure. Number of MSNAs will be reduced.

DRC is also facing substantial cuts, having received termination letters from USG, DRC representative to the GSC SAG will be leaving her position at end of March.

UK foreign aid budget cuts will have impact on the IFRC.

InterAction mentioned that 10,000 projects reviewed by USG, already received a termination letter. More termination letters could still arrive within in the next 24-48 hours. Some of these projects also received waivers so a waiver is not a guarantee for not receiving termination orders. IOM: Shelter projects was also terminated.

CRS is also heavily impacted, both project-wise and workforce-wise, at the country and global levels

### **1. Impact of SWO**

GSC received its termination letter for the BHA grant. Exact implications unclear at this moment, there is a need to explore the next steps how to breach past the 90 days. More information will come soon.

#### **1.1 Summary all-partners meeting**

GSC organised a first SAG meeting, followed by a donor consultation group meeting, and then two all-partner meetings to accommodate for the different time zones.

To better understand the impact of the SWO on the shelter cluster, GSC gathered info from FTS and reporting from country clusters:

- FTS indicated a large reliance on USG funding (50% considering also multisectoral contributions or refugee responses)
- Out of the \$3.5B requested by the Shelter Sector in 2024, \$1.2B was funded, with the USG contributing \$0.4B. Some countries with the largest amounts of USG funding are Ukraine (88M), DRC (51.8M), Afghanistan (42.7M), Palestine (39.3M) and Turkiye (26.6M)
- Countries with the largest proportions of USG funding, over 80% are El Salvador, DRC, Haiti and Nigeria

GSC ST organised the feedback received from the participants in both the all-partners meetings and identified five areas: advocacy, strategic aspects, additional funding, support to countries and operations, information and communication. The Global Support Team started thinking how to operationalize the feedback and link them to the GSC strategic priorities.

#### **1.2 GCCG survey**

GSC presented key findings from a survey conducted by the Global Shelter Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG). Out of 1,059 total responses, only 50 came from Shelter Cluster partners, with the majority based in Sudan, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. While the data is not fully representative, it provides an indicative snapshot of the situation. A significant 92% of shelter partners received stop work orders (39 full, 7 partial), heavily impacting operations. The disruptions included delayed project implementation, service reductions, staff layoffs, and spending freezes, with an average reduction of 61.2% in people reached, 42% in staffing

capacity, and 43.8% in geographic coverage. Only 16 organizations reported having contingency plans, while 14 stated their projects would fully stop due to the work orders.

Regarding funding waivers, a total of \$217 million in waived activities was reported across all agencies, but only 5% came from shelter partners. Of the 50 shelter organizations surveyed, 66% received a full or partial waiver, though these covered only 31% of their total funding, indicating that waivers were generally limited in scope. To gain further clarity on waiver allocations and inform future guidance, the Global Shelter Cluster is considering launching a short follow-up survey. However, before proceeding, feedback was requested from SEC members on whether there is sufficient interest or if survey fatigue may limit participation.

SAG members feedback on the potential of a survey to map out what activities are waived:

- Clusters might be more responsive to email coming from cluster leads than from OCHA
- Good to do a follow up understanding the full picture
- Can we include a question on if the partners are still able to implement with other partners, mechanisms, infrastructure gone?
- Waiver does not mean that funds are flowing
- Certainly, useful to get some additional information, but waiver language might be obsolete with the termination letters coming in, so change of language needed
- Decisions taken at the field level are not based on waiver info, main humanitarian organisations close offices, situation is complex so the information in a survey like this might not capture what is happening at the field level.
- Things are changing on daily basis, so not sure if a survey like this might give us much additional information.
- Interesting to see the impact not so much in terms of funding but the numbers (reach/coverage etc). Also interesting to look at implications for trust, security, access and stability. We need to understand the redistribution of resources our partners have to do now to decide where to invest the few resources that they have.

GSC will review the questionnaire based on this feedback and will send a poll to the SAG whether or not to proceed with the questionnaire.

## **2. Fundraising strategy**

GSC Support team is at initial stage of looking at fundraising strategy:

- Mapping of traditional donors, private sector and foundations. This mapping will be shared once in a further stage.
- There is the need for a short-term fundraising strategy to until the end of the year, and there will be a longer-term fundraising approach for the wider sector.
- This longer-term strategy: the group discussed the rules of engagement when fundraising on behalf of sector / cluster membership.
- Idea is to set up a mini-SAG around fundraising. Reach out to Caroline if you are interested in more details.
- UNHCR expressed that caution is needed in fundraising and we should not be approaching all the same donors as other clusters/organisations. If we go ahead we should not duplicate efforts

## **3. Readout IASC principles / EDG meeting**

[‘A simplified and more efficient humanitarian system’](#), by Jan Egeland and Joyce Msuya was shared, highlighting the importance of simplification of the humanitarian architecture:

- EDG met in Rome two weeks ago. The efficiency paper was drafted before 24<sup>th</sup> of January. EDG suggested that we must be even bolder than described in this paper. This was presented to the principles meeting last week and recommendations were put on the table. Shortly we should be receiving a letter from the EDG to the principles on the recommendations and way forward.
- Key impact to the clusters are the potential deactivation of 7 to 11 country level clusters. Though this has been discussed at GCCG and have a transition guide, the process how to select countries will hope to become clearer.
- Within GCCG few clusters have been meeting and discuss how we can simplify clusters. Keeping this all in mind, the GSC proposes to organize a mini-SAG to discuss this. During the call, IOM, IFRC, UNHCR expressed their interest in participating. The rest of interested, can reach out to Seki
- The lead organizations of the cluster are large and big organizations and in the light of efficiency IFRC asked if there are rumors or thoughts around whether it will be reviewed if the current lead agencies are still the most suitable to lead the cluster? GSC stated that these discussions are currently not happening.

#### **4. Discussion on ways forward for the cluster**

- Annual meeting: not able to host a full face to face because of travel bans, and will likely be largely or fully online
- HNPW is going ahead, but two of the shelter cluster sessions are cancelled
- Working groups and CoP:
  - o Durable Solutions WG: ToR was shared with SAG for review but no comments received. There was discussion if this is the right moment to discuss durable solutions with the language change that is happening around climate etc, so possibly this WG needs to have low visibility. A follow up meeting to discuss will be organized early next week. During the call, NRC, CRS, Habitat for Humanity and CARE expressed their interest in participating.