Shelter Cluster

Coordinating shelter in Haiti
IFRC and the Shelter Cluster

On the coordination front, clusters need to shift from simply sharing information, to setting strategy… One sector to do this well was shelter.

John Holmes, "Analysis: Are humanitarians learning the lessons from Haiti?" 28 October 2010

A devastating disaster

When the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on 12 January 2010, it generated a disaster in a country already deep in humanitarian crisis. The earthquake struck Port-au-Prince and other rural areas at 16:53 local time when the majority of Haitians were busy at work or school. The effects were devastating, killing over 200,000 individuals and displacing 1.5 million.

Hundreds of international organizations and government agencies responded immediately, and aid poured in from around the world to help those affected by the disaster. The challenges they faced were unprecedented.

IFRC and the cluster approach

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in co-operation with the Haitian Red Cross was a key partner in the response - not only in relief operations but also as convener of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Shelter Cluster.

The "cluster" approach is a method of coordinating and strengthening the effectiveness of disaster response operations in support of the host country's government. It is part of the humanitarian reform process that was developed by the IASC working group, a body comprised of the main humanitarian actors including the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies.

At the 2005 General Assembly, the IFRC committed to convening the Shelter Cluster after natural disasters. In Haiti, the IFRC began convening the Shelter Cluster on 10 February 2010. Over the following nine months, the Shelter Cluster coordinated the response of numerous agencies throughout the country as they provided emergency and transitional shelter assistance, and non-food items such as blankets, toolkits and kitchen sets.

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THE SHELTER CLUSTER

At a global level the Shelter Cluster is led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in conflict situations, and by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) following natural disasters. At the country level the Shelter Cluster is comprised of members also identified as 'agencies' from Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, non-governmental organisations, United Nations organisations, donors, and the host country government. Shelter Coordination Teams are deployed at a country level to provide coordination services to the Shelter Cluster.

For more details please visit:

www.sheltercluster.org

THE CLUSTER MEMBERS

Government

Shelter Coordination Team

United Nations

Donors

NGOs

Red Cross Red Crescent

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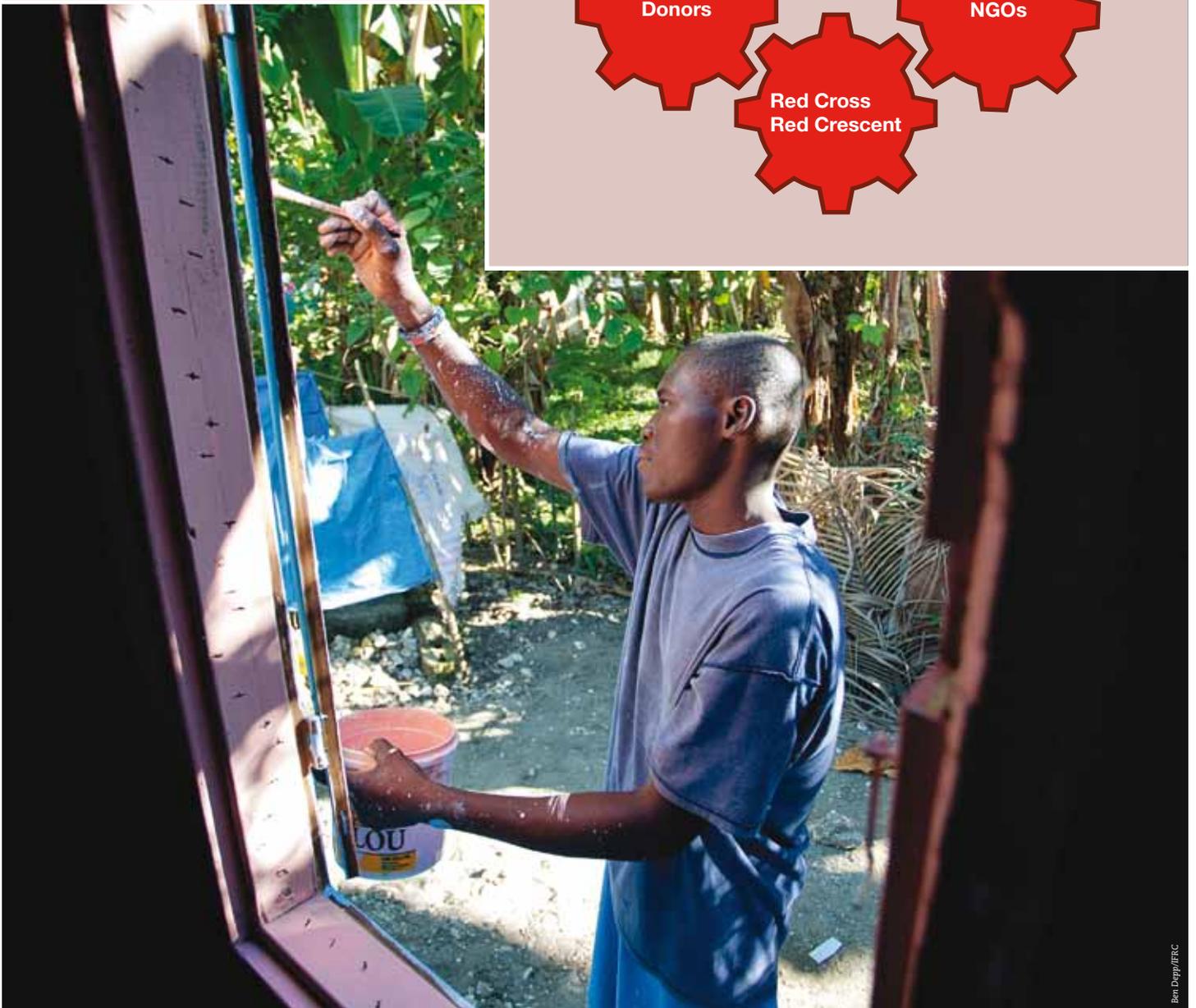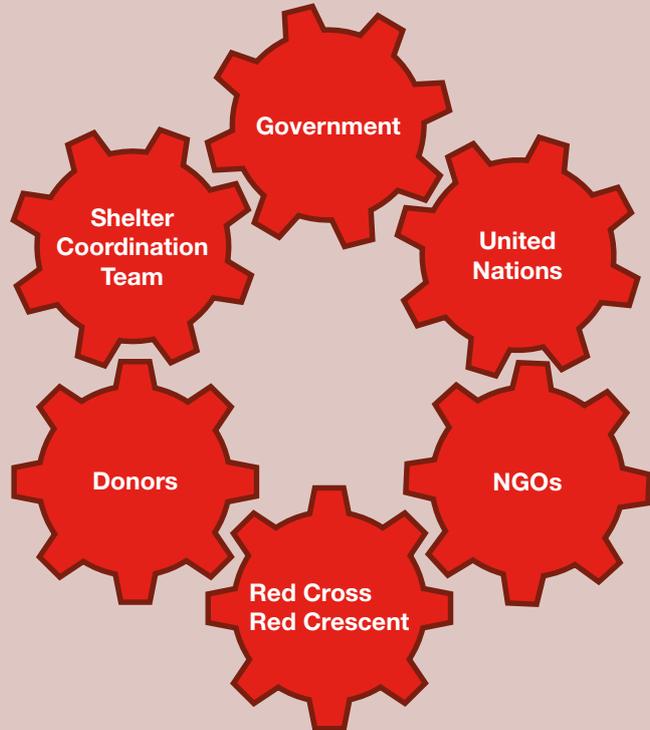
The SCT

The aim of cluster coordination is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a response delivered by a large number of humanitarian agencies. A key element of this process is the cluster's 'shelter coordination team' (SCT).

In other deployments of the Shelter Cluster by the IFRC, the SCT had an average of three staff. In Haiti, the average was fifteen. It was the largest SCT ever assembled – proportional to the scale of the emergency response operation – yet the overhead costs to manage the team were less than two per cent of total budget spent on the shelter operation. The size of the SCT allowed the Shelter Cluster to provide a range of services for shelter agencies which improved their ability to respond to the needs of the affected population.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the SCT helped coordinate the efforts of more than 80 agencies. In the following months, once initial shelter needs were met, the number decreased to approximately 69 agencies. Each agency assumed the responsibility of assessing and responding to needs across the affected areas of Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Petit Goâve, Grand Goâve, Gressier and Léogâne.

The emergency shelter distribution effort in Haiti was one of the fastest ever mounted. In the first six months Shelter Cluster agencies reached nearly 2.2 million people through the distribution of tarpaulins, tents, toolkits, ropes, kitchen sets, blankets, sleeping mats and the construction of transitional shelters. By 10 November, Shelter Cluster agencies increased this figure to more than 2.6 million.

On 10 November, the IFRC handed over responsibility of the Shelter Cluster to UN-HABITAT to coordinate the shelter recovery phase.

The infographic was facilitated by the SCT's media and communications advisor. It was created for the media, donors and other external partners, in order to provide a clear and concise overview on the shelter response of the Shelter Cluster in Haiti.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI generated a disaster in a country already deep in a humanitarian crisis. According to UNDP's Human Development Index 2009, Haiti was listed 140 out of 182 nations, making it the poorest country in the western hemisphere. In 2009, approximately 58% of the population lacked access to clean water, 40% of households did not have access to adequate food, and more than half the informal settlements in Port-au-Prince were located in ravines and gullies and were susceptible to inundation.

ACHIEVEMENTS AS OF NOVEMBER 2010

MEMBERS OF THE SHELTER AND NON-FOOD-ITEMS CLUSTER have delivered vital aid to the estimated 1.5 million people who were directly affected by the earthquake. Despite a destroyed port, a severely damaged airport and a lack of infrastructure, cluster members reached an average of 100,000 people per week in the first four months of the response operation. Each family received two tarpaulins or one tent. In the following months, with over 19,000 transitional shelters constructed, shelter agencies have reached over 2.6 million individuals.

TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

Today, Shelter Cluster agencies are moving as quickly as possible to build transitional shelters despite challenging conditions. As the reality of providing permanent housing to survivors of a disaster is a long-term goal, transitional shelters are an essential interim solution. Whilst not permanent, they offer significantly more comfort and security against weather than emergency tents and tarpaulins.

19,089 COMPLETED

**TOTAL
125,000**
PLANNED FOR
END OF 2011

= 1,000 TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

HEAVY DUTY TARPAULINS

748,919 DISTRIBUTED

Tarpaulins are primarily used for family shelters, but can also be used for latrines, wash rooms, market stalls, etc.

270,000 REPLACEMENT AS OF NOV. 2010

= 1,000 TARPS

The average lifespan of a tarpaulin is 6 months. There will be a need for 218,660 replacements in March 2011 and 130,919 more in Sept. 2011

TENTS

97,692 DISTRIBUTED

= 1,000 TENTS
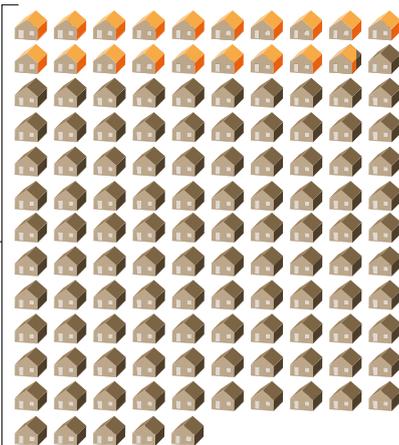
HOST FAMILIES

500,000-600,000
PEOPLE LIVING WITH
A HOST FAMILY

TOTAL DISPLACED PEOPLE

30%
PERCENT OF DISPLACED PEOPLE LIVING WITH A HOST FAMILY

EVICTIONS

Evictions are a very real threat facing earthquake-affected displaced people in Haiti today. It is estimated that between 60-70% of IDPs (internally displaced persons) camps in Port-au-Prince are on private plots. Since March, many earthquake-affected IDPs living in spontaneous camp settlements have been subject to an increasing number of forced evictions or eviction threats.

28,065 EVICTED

144,175 THREATENED

88,203 IN MEDIATION

AS OF SEPT. 2010

RETURN TO NEIGHBORHOODS STRATEGY

Humanitarian agencies are focusing on a "return-to-neighbourhood" strategy which intends to gradually draw the displaced population out of camps through the provision of shelters (transitional, permanent, home repairs), livelihood support, infrastructure development and the delivery of services.

PERMANENT HOUSE
TRANSITIONAL SHELTER
HOME REPAIR
FORMER SITE

1,300 CAMPS

TRANSITIONAL SHELTER
NEW SITE
PERMANENT HOUSE
SUPPORT TO HOST FAMILIES
LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

THE CHALLENGES

1 DEBRIS The presence of debris generated by the earthquake is one of the principal impediments to neighourhood returns and reconstruction.

2 LAND The complex, poorly documented, and often informal land tenure and occupancy arrangements in Haiti present a challenge for relocation and reconstruction activities.

3 ACCESSIBILITY In urban and rural areas there are major logistical challenges for agencies to deliver construction materials and access sites for building.

4 NEED FOR REPLACEMENT Agencies are balancing the need to replace emergency shelter materials while also progressing with transitional and permanent shelter construction.

THE WAY FORWARD

The provision of transitional shelters is gaining momentum, particularly in rural areas where more land is available. It is essential that the identification of additional, safe relocation sites, debris removal and the required planning processes are urgently addressed by the authorities to enable the large scale construction of transitional shelters and ultimately the provision of permanent housing solutions.

EMERGENCY SHELTER → TRANSITIONAL SHELTER → PERMANENT SHELTER

GRAPHIC BY STANFORD KAY STUDIO

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↘ THE SHELTER COORDINATION TEAM

Remote Support

Deputy coordinator

Administrative support

Debris advisor

Media and communications advisor

Information manager

Coordinator

Logistics coordinator

Mapping advisor

Government liaison

Technical coordinator

Environmental advisor

Housing, land and property advisor

Urban settlement advisor

Hub coordinator Léogâne

Hub and sub-hub coordinators Port-au-Prince

Hub coordinator Jacmel

Contingency planning focal point

Information manager

Information manager

Hub and Sub-hub level
National level
Global Level

Shelter Cluster coordinator, Gerhard Tauscher, discusses the shelter response in Haiti with UN Special Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton

Logistics coordinator, Pat Naidoo

Hub coordinator in Leogane, Stephane Savarimuthu, discusses planning with Shelter Cluster agencies

Shelter Cluster coordinator, Gregg McDonald, meets with the former president of Haiti, Rene Preval

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ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	PROVIDED BY
Coordinator	Managed the shelter coordination team; responsible for representing the Shelter Cluster at all levels, including the government and other lead stakeholders in the humanitarian response. Reported to IFRC Head of Delegation for security and administration issues, and to the global shelter cluster coordinator for technical issues.	German Red Cross Netherlands Red Cross IFRC
Deputy coordinator	Ensured coherence within the SCT; coordination of the strategic advisory group (SAG) and overall support to coordinator.	IFRC
Hub coordinators	Provided coordination at the sub-national level among local agencies, government authorities and other shelter partners; facilitated partnerships, and linked the needs of local organisations with resources of shelter agencies.	Australian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, UNHCR, IFRC
Information managers	Information managers were responsible for data collection and analysis, producing visual tools i.e., mapping services, charts and graphs, to monitor progress and implementation, identify gaps and prevent overlaps in the response.	American Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, CARE, IFRC
Mapping advisor	Prepared maps to illustrate data easily and clearly; provided training for agencies on the use of Google Earth and the Global Positioning System (GPS).	CartONG, MapAction, IFRC
Technical coordinator	Provided expertise on shelter programming and construction, and technical guidance to agencies; ensured best practices and appropriate standards applied, and common parameters agreed for a better response. Coordinate the technical working groups (TwiGs)	CARE, French Red Cross, IFRC
Debris advisor	Developed alternative usages for rubble i.e., Gabion house, concrete blocks, gravel, etc.	Australian Red Cross
Housing, land and property advisor	Provided guidance and coordination on land tenure issues with agencies, government bodies, external partners and the United Nations.	CARE International
Urban settlement advisor	Provided guidance on urban planning, linkages with long-term reconstruction and urban planning issues.	CARE International
Government liaison	Focal point for the government of Haiti and the UN resident coordinator; ensured visibility and consistency for agencies; supported the coordinator with diplomatic relations.	IFRC
Environmental advisor	Identified environmentally sustainable solutions relating to shelter provision and construction.	World Wildlife Fund
Media and communications advisor	Development of communications/advocacy tools for agencies; support with international and local media and beneficiary communications.	British Red Cross, IFRC
Contingency planning focal point	Agency focal point for hurricane season i.e., stocks, support to the government of Haiti and relations with key partners.	French Red Cross
Administrative support	Support in filing, administration, translation, etc.	IFRC
Logistics coordinator	Procurement and logistical support for the SCT.	Finnish Red Cross, IFRC
Remote support	Remote, expertise support with short trips at critical moments (hando-vers, workshops, etc.) to ensure consistency with past decisions and best practices.	Andorran Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, IFRC

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The strategic advisory group (SAG)

consisted of select representatives from shelter agencies who provided a common strategy for the shelter response. The SAG was chaired by the SCT coordinator, and was held periodically to revise the strategy as well as other Shelter Cluster position papers.

Technical group (

were facilitated by SC needs-basis only. They agencies interested in pa to outline parameters a for different aspects of t TWiG met to address the f cash for work, host fam land and settlement tra others. TWiGs were als discussion with other Sanitation and Hygien consistent respons humanitaria

Coordination services

Successful coordination cannot happen without the right mechanisms and tools. The SCT in Haiti provided numerous coordination products and mechanisms for shelter agencies, donors, the general public and the government of Haiti – all in the aim of sharing information and improving the response. The following examples illustrate a few of the key products and mechanisms made available by the SCT.

A question and answer / key messages

document was created specifically for shelter agencies by the media and communications advisor. Updated on a regular basis, the objective was to streamline messaging for international and local media, in order to provide a consistent and consolidated overview of the shelter response in Haiti.

Progress

on the shelter respo on a regular basis to Haiti and the UN huma office. The process was liaison advisor with j SCT members. The re achievements and p agencies, also serving reinforce the suppor Cluster to the host go contained advocac general shel

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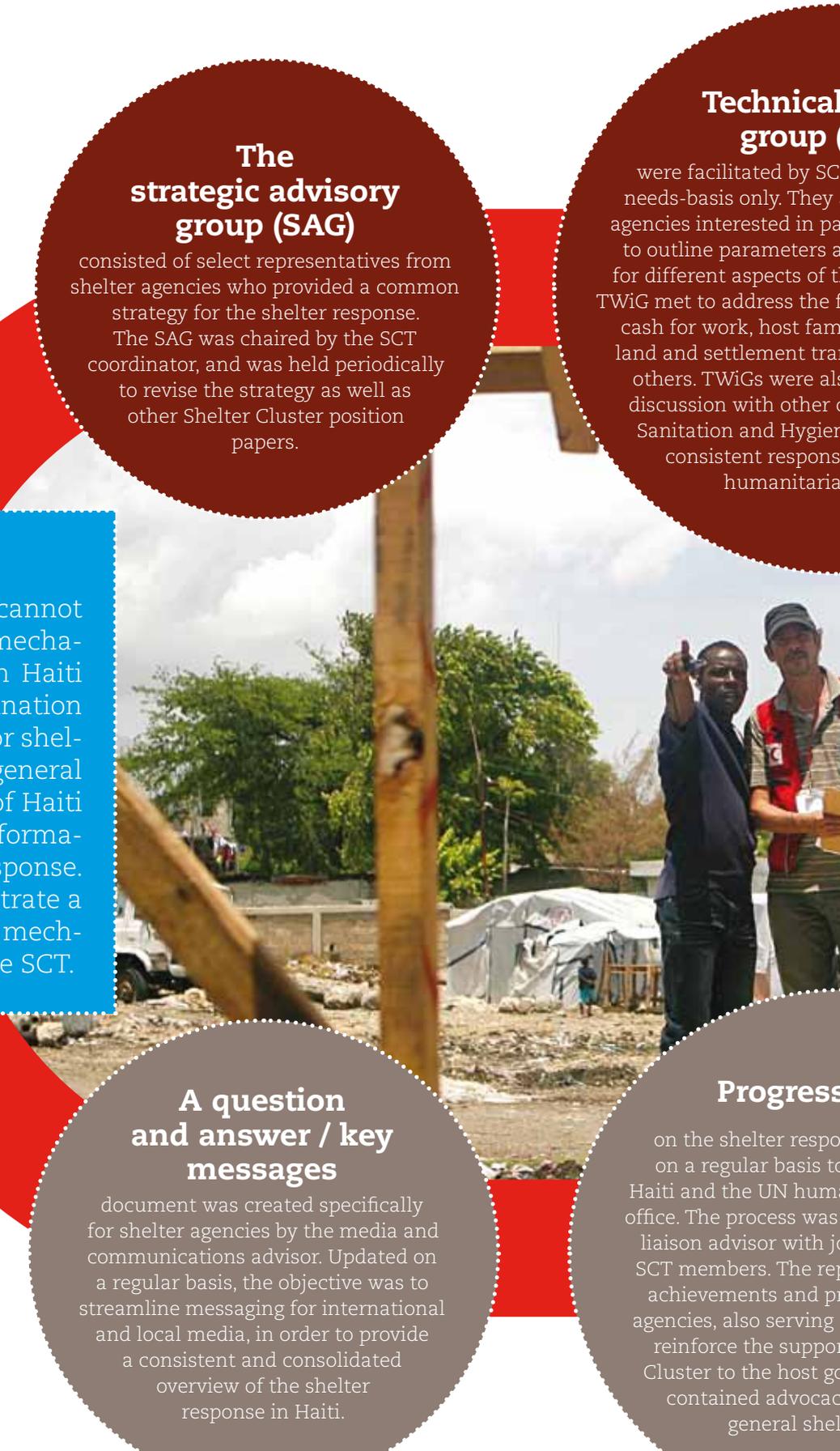
working (TWiG)

T staff, and exist on a
are open to any shelter
rticipating. The aim was
nd technical standards
he response. In Haiti the
following: public outreach,
ilies – host community,
nsitional shelter, among
so used as a forum for
clusters such as Water,
e (WASH), ensuring a
e within the larger
n operation.

Meetings

at national, hub and sub-hub
level were organized by the SCT
and conducted on a regular basis.
They provided the latest information
on the shelter response, including
statistics on shelter related issues,
maps, government related matters,
etc. The meetings were created
for and open to all shelter
agencies.

A Twitter

account was created by the
media and communications
advisor with the aim of providing
a forum for news, information and
discussion on the shelter response
in Haiti. It resulted in nearly 500
subscribers or 'followers' including
cluster agencies, local and
international journalists and
the general public in Haiti
and abroad.

s reports

nse were submitted
o the government of
anitarian coordinator's
led by the government
pint support from the
ports summarized the
rojections for shelter
as an advocacy tool to
t role of the Shelter
overnment. They also
y messages on the
ter strategy.

A website

for the Shelter Cluster was
created in French and English to
serve agencies and the general public.
The site hosted strategic decisions and
operational parameters agreed on by
the cluster, information on meetings,
maps, statistics, news articles from
local and international media on
shelter, and contact details
for the SCT.

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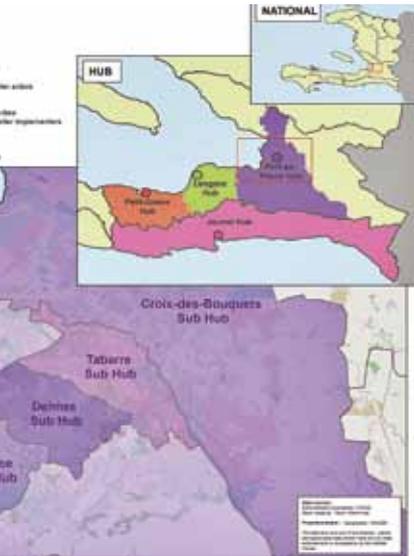
A macro-to-micro level approach

The SCT was effective in Haiti due to the macro-to-micro level approach it used to coordinate the work of shelter agencies. The approach allowed the Shelter Cluster to serve a large number of beneficiaries requiring shelter assistance over a wide geographical range, illustrated as follows:

↘ At the **national** level the SCT – in close coordination with other clusters and the national government – decided upon the main strategic decisions and overall parameters of the operation.

↘ The earthquake-affected areas were then divided into **hubs** based on regions – Port-au-Prince, Léogâne and Jacmel. The SCT provided a consistent presence in each hub by leading regular meetings and offering a range of support services for shelter agencies, often linking the resources of agencies with needs of local authorities and organisations.

↘ Hubs were split into **sub-hubs** based on districts within each region, which were run by project coordinators from various shelter agencies. These project coordinators took on the responsibility of coordinating the sub-hubs in addition to their project implementation work; conducting meetings between agencies within each sub-hub, sharing updated information and resolving issues between agencies or local authorities. The SCT provided support to the sub-hubs by working alongside the sub-hub coordinator, assisting on government-related matters and technical issues, information management, etc.

↘ Finally, each sub-hub was broken down into smaller **zones**. Within each zone, a shelter agency was identified as the zone coordinator (in some cases one agency coordinated a sub-hub and a zone), liaising on a smaller scale with other agencies within the same zone. The zone coordinator would help provide information on the zone, identify boundaries, partners and needs, among other tasks, in order to identify gaps and achieve a harmonized response. The zonal relationships were reinforced at Shelter Cluster sub-hub meetings, where agencies could join together on a regular basis to review strategies, progress and implementation at a larger level alongside the support of local authorities.

↘

SUB-HUB MEETINGS enabled agencies to build reliable, consistent and transparent relationships with the mayor's office in many areas of Port-au-Prince. This was particularly valuable in the Haitian context where personal relationships are critical to success. In the district of Carrefour for example, a representative of the mayor's office, Mr. Blaise, was present at every sub-hub meeting. Mr. Blaise knew each agency, where they were building, and their plans for construction. In return every agency had a clear, direct link at the local government level. This relationship benefited both parties in their efforts to serve the local community.

↘

TRUST AND COOPERATION between shelter agencies were another result of sub-hub meetings. At one meeting in the district of Tabarre, the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, an agency expressed concern that a few transitional shelters given to beneficiaries had been sold to other Haitians. The sub-hub meeting provided a forum for agencies to trustfully discuss the problem, share beneficiary-selection criteria, and evaluate methods for improvement.

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National Caseload: 3-4 million people	**WHO:** Dedicated Shelter Coordination Team and Coordinator **ROLE:** National coordination and support to hubs **INTERLOCUTORS:** National stakeholders
Hubs 500,000 – 2 million people	**WHO:** Dedicated Hub Coordination and Information Manager **ROLE:** Regional support and coordination for sub-hubs **INTERLOCUTORS:** Public administrations, Mayors and Shelter Cluster agencies
Sub Hubs 300,000 – 500,000 people	**WHO:** Non-dedicated Sub-Hub Coordinator **ROLE:** Coordination with shelter agencies at district level **INTERLOCUTORS:** Mayor, Municipal administration and Shelter Cluster agencies.
Zones 5,000 – 20,000 people	**WHO:** Non-dedicated shelter agency as 'area corrdinator' **ROLE:** Coordination with agencies in the zone **INTERLOCUTORS:** Communities and Shelter Cluster implementers

Ben Depp/IFRC

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Information management

Information management was one of the most valuable elements of the coordination process in Haiti. The SCT information managers first gathered data on activities undertaken by cluster partner agencies in order to create a consolidated picture of the overall operation. The data enabled the Shelter Cluster to identify gaps and overlaps in the response. The information was fed back to agencies during national, hub, and sub-hub meetings in the forms of tables, maps, or on Google Earth mapping. The information products allowed agencies to visually identify their implementation activities and adapt accordingly for an improved response.
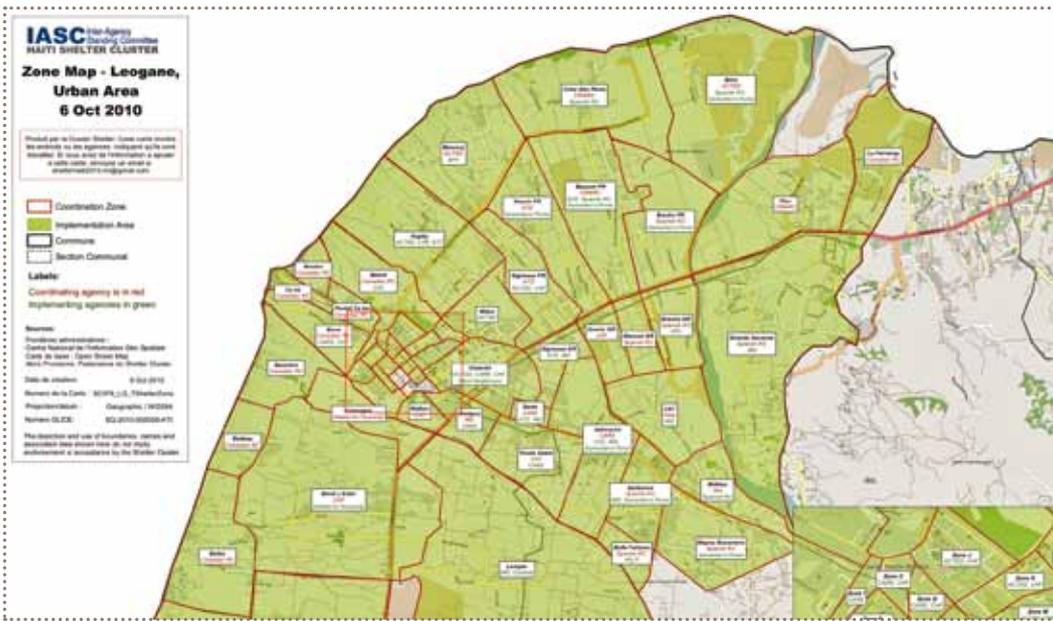
The Shelter Cluster is an example of best practice in cluster information management, as well as in public information support to the cluster members

– United Nations Humanitarian Country Team evaluation for Haiti, 6 May 2010

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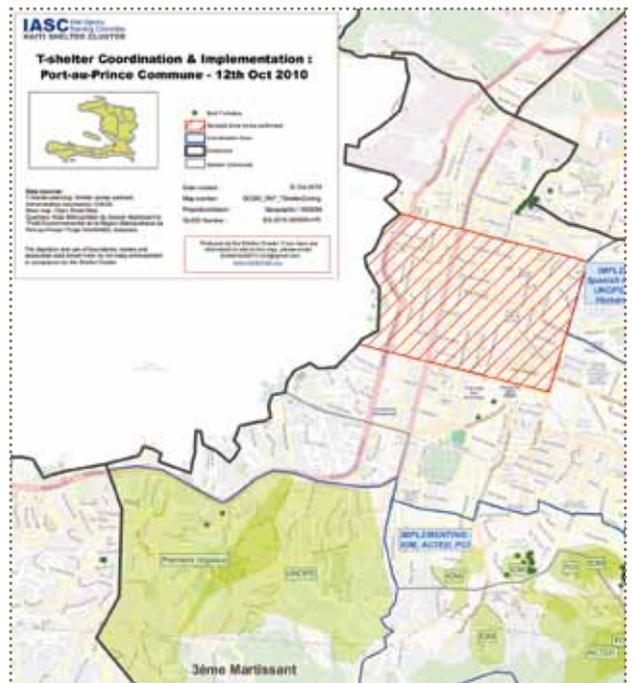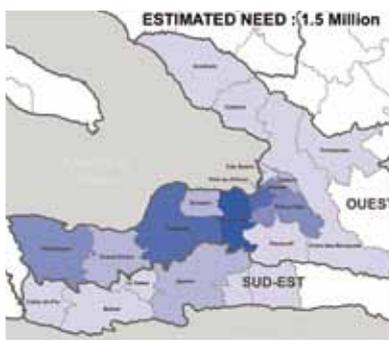
Demonstrated success

The unique size and range of services provided by the SCT, combine with its macro-to-micro level approach of coordination, served both agencies and beneficiaries in Haiti. The following examples aim to illustrate a few of the achievements:

Léogâne is a two-hour drive outside the capital city. In the early stages of the response, the SCT discovered that information did not exist about the situation in the mountainous areas of Léogâne, and consequently humanitarian aid was not reaching the affected population. Not one agency alone had the means to assess the situation, so through successful coordination, the SCT hub coordinator in Léogâne together with the Logistics Cluster and Health Cluster facilitated a combined mission, helping to identify the needs of the isolated population and expediting a targeted response.

The SCT based in Léogâne made efforts to ensure agencies maintained consistent standards for transitional shelter construction. When shelter structures were identified which did not comply with the Shelter Cluster's minimal standards for construction, the SCT assisted the agency to make the recommended changes. The teamwork approach was successful on many occasions and it helped agencies provide better shelters for beneficiaries.

The SCT was able to facilitate partnerships on several occasions, linking the needs of local agencies with resources of agencies. In one particular instance during the early stages of the shelter response, a local non-governmental organisation in Léogâne had excellent knowledge about the community and their needs, but lacked the resources to serve them. The SCT was able to partner the local organisation with a Korean non-governmental organisation that had plenty of resources, but lacked any knowledge about the situation in the field. The relationship benefited both parties and served the needs of the community.

Nazon is a neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince. During a sub-hub meeting, three agencies discovered an existing overlap in their programming; each agency had been developing transitional housing in the same area, thus targeting the same beneficiaries. However, through the early identification of this issue, agencies were encouraged to exchange information, and ensure their programs targeted different families, consequently serving a wider percentage of the displaced population.

In **Port-au-Prince central**, the mayor's office requested that the SCT organise a local media tour in order to share some of the successes in their district. The SCT was able to facilitate the media tour which resulted in nationally televised programmes about transitional shelter construction and recognised the work of shelter agencies. It led to an improved sense of partnership between the local government and shelter agencies, and increased understanding about the work of shelter agencies in the local community.

A transitional shelter provided by the Canadian Red Cross.

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Further reading

⬂ **The Shelter Cluster website**
www.sheltercluster.org

⬂ **Shelter Cluster in Haiti website**
https://sites.google.com/site/shelterhaiti2010/

⬂ **Humanitarian reform and cluster system**
www.humanitarianreform.org

⬂ **The cluster approach**
www.sheltercluster.org/Pages/
TheClusterApproach.aspx

⬂ **Evaluation of the Shelter Cluster in Haiti**
www.sheltercluster.org/Evaluations/Forms/
AllItems.aspx

⬂ **Shelter and settlement department, IFRC**
www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-
management/responding/services-for-the-
disaster-affected/shelter-and-settlement/

⬂ **One Response**
http://oneresponse.info

A transitional shelter nears completion among an IDP camp with emergency shelter, due to the support of the Shelter Cluster agency, Concern worldwide.

For more information on the IFRC shelter and settlements programme, please contact:

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Global Shelter Cluster Coordinator on behalf of the IFRC
E-mail: graham.saunders@ifrc.org
Phone: +41 22 730 42 41 / Fax: +41 22 733 03 95

For more on the Humanitarian Reform, the role of the IFRC as convener of the
Shelter Cluster and the SCT, please visit **www.sheltercluster.org**

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives, changing minds.