

SUDAN SHELTER AND NFI CLUSTER STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

VERSION 1.0 – 5 MAY 2025

I. BACKGROUND

The Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) Cluster in Sudan was formally activated in 2012 to coordinate the humanitarian response for populations affected by conflict and natural disasters. The Cluster is led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as the designated Cluster Lead Agency, in partnership with a Co-Coordinating Agency.

The outbreak of armed conflict on April 15, 2023, has led to catastrophic consequences for civilians, with widespread destruction of homes and public infrastructure, disruption of public services, and massive internal and cross-border displacement. The fallout has also triggered hyperinflation, scarcity of essential goods, and severe fuel and energy shortages affecting telecommunications, essential services, and humanitarian logistics. These compounded constraints pose challenges to the effective delivery of shelter and NFI assistance. As of current estimates, at least 11.6 million people across Sudan are in need of Shelter and NFI assistance, a staggering reflection of the scale and complexity of the ongoing crisis.

Against this backdrop, the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) of the Shelter and NFI Cluster plays a vital role in navigating these complexities. The SAG ensures that strategic decision-making, especially regarding prioritization of needs and allocation of resources, is done in a collaborative, transparent, and inclusive manner. By bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, the SAG fosters collective ownership and reinforces accountability. This strengthens the Cluster's overall strategic direction and enhances its ability to deliver coherent, needs-based, and principled humanitarian assistance in one of the world's most challenging humanitarian contexts.

II. PURPOSE

The SAG serves as a compact, inclusive, and efficient advisory body within the Shelter and NFI Cluster, engaging selected cluster members representing diverse stakeholder groups. It guides the Cluster through consensus-based decision-making, providing strategic direction, policy guidance, advocacy, and coordination support. The SAG plays a vital role during Cluster Strategy Development, the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) processes by offering technical input and ensuring that decisions reflect the collective priorities of the Cluster. While its membership is deliberately limited to enable agile and timely decision-making, the composition is carefully designed to reflect the diversity of the Cluster's broader membership. Through regular, consultative, and collaborative engagement, the SAG strengthens the Cluster's governance and enhances the coherence, efficiency, and accountability of the Shelter and NFI response in Sudan.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) is anchored in the [Humanitarian Principles](#) of neutrality, impartiality, independence, and 'do no harm', as well as the [Principles of Partnership](#), and the [Transformative Agenda](#). SAG members are expected to consistently contribute to the group's efforts and actively champion specific activities based on their knowledge, experience, and interest. Meetings are convened by the Cluster Coordinator or Co-Coordinator as needed and are conducted under Chatham House Rules to encourage open and candid discussion without attributing statements to individual organizations. All documents under discussion will be shared with SAG members, who are responsible for consulting their respective constituents. Once endorsed, documents will be circulated to the full Cluster membership and published on the Cluster website.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

As a Strategic Advisory Group, the following are the areas of responsibility:

1. Strategic Role:



SUDAN SHELTER CLUSTER

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

- a. Develop, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the Shelter & NFI Cluster Strategy, including planning and facilitation of Strategic Planning workshops.
 - b. Contribute to the development of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, including updating the Strategic Operational Framework linked to and based on the Shelter and NFI Cluster strategy.
 - c. Develop the Cluster's Preparedness and Emergency Response Plans
 - d. Develop position papers and statements on Shelter and NFI Cluster-related issues
 - e. Provide guidance on resource mobilization and fundraising strategies.
 - f. Assist the cluster in identifying and addressing policy and practice gaps and trends that impact service delivery.
2. Technical Support role:
- a. Guide and support the functioning of Technical Working groups, including SAG members taking a lead role in specific TWiGs and being responsible for the outputs.
 - b. Develop policy and guidance documents on different aspects of the Shelter and NFI response.
 - c. Provision of inputs to other relevant structures through the Shelter and NFI Cluster (ICCG, HCT, etc.)
 - c. Develop guidance notes for funding instruments, including Sudan Humanitarian Fund, CERF, etc..
3. Advocacy and Advisory role:
- a. Develop and implement a shelter advocacy and communications strategy
 - b. Develop advocacy or position papers and key messages for specific issues
 - c. Advise and bring shelter priorities and issues to the attention of the Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as other stakeholders
 - d. Advocate for funding or other related challenges at various fora and levels
 - e. Review and provide input on the allocation strategies and parameters for country funding opportunities.
 - f. Act as the Strategic Review Committee and facilitate review of members' project proposals for various pooled funding opportunities.
4. Coordination role:
- a. Improve and strengthen the overall structure, capacity, and effectiveness of the cluster at national and sub-national levels.
 - b. Ensure active engagement in cluster meetings and working groups as well as timely information sharing, in order to lead by example and promote cooperation and collaboration.
 - c. Represent interests and perspectives of respective constituencies, ensuring all members voices are considered in decision-making processes.
 - d. Advocate for settlement approaches and holistic responses with other clusters, including integration of cross-cutting issues in the Shelter and NFI response.
 - e. Promote the inclusion of shelter and NFI issues in relevant development/ nexus forums.
5. Capacity building: Support capacity-building initiatives, including training and coaching for cluster members.
6. Monitoring and Evaluation:
- a. Facilitate the CCPM exercise and provide feedback on the Cluster's performance and achievements.
 - b. Support the design of monitoring and evaluation tools for the Shelter and NFI Cluster.
 - c. Assist with the preparation of different evaluation reports, as well as good practice and lessons learned publications.
 - d. Ensure the Cluster is accountable to the affected populations, and promote transparency, learning, and continuous improvement

V. Eligibility and Membership

The SAG should reflect the broader Shelter and NFI Cluster membership and consist of senior representatives who are empowered to make decisions on behalf of their organizations and stakeholder groups. The SAG plays a vital role in developing and adjusting the Cluster's strategic framework, priorities, and work plan, and must ensure a regular, two-way flow of information with the wider Cluster membership.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for SAG membership, organizations must demonstrate:

- Operational relevance to the humanitarian response in Sudan.
- Technical expertise in Shelter and/or NFI.
- Capacity to provide strategic and practical support to the Cluster.
- Commitment to consistent and active engagement.

SAG Composition

The SAG is composed of **11 voting members**, one representative per organization, structured as follows:

- 4 National NGOs
- 3 International NGOs
- 3 UN Agencies
- 1 representative from the National Cluster Coordination Team

In addition, **non-voting observers** may include key stakeholders such as donors, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, OCHA, and others, as appropriate.

VI. MODALITIES OF WORK & COMMUNICATION

- The SAG will meet at least once per quarter, with meetings convened and facilitated by the Cluster Coordinator and/or Co-Coordinator. Ad hoc meetings may be called by the Chairperson or at the request of any SAG member, based on urgency or relevance of the issue.
- Meetings may be held in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format, depending on context and accessibility. When in-person meetings are feasible, venues may rotate among member organizations that volunteer to host, or be determined by the Chairperson.
- An agenda will be circulated in advance of each meeting, allowing members to propose discussion items and prepare accordingly.
- Sub-national coordinators or cluster members may raise issues for SAG consideration. With SAG approval, they may be invited to attend specific meetings to present or participate in relevant discussions.
- Meeting minutes will be drafted, reviewed, and shared with all SAG members and the wider Cluster membership within two weeks. Minutes will also be published on the Sudan page of the Global Shelter and NFI Cluster website. SAG members are expected to contribute to the preparation and validation of meeting minutes as needed.
- SAG business, such as decision-making, document drafting, feedback collection, or strategic inputs, may also take place outside of scheduled meetings. This will be facilitated through email, WhatsApp, or other online collaboration tools, particularly when remote consultation is more practical or time-sensitive.

VII. DECISION-MAKING AND VALIDATION

The SAG facilitates decision-making through a consensus-based approach, promoting collaboration, open dialogue, and respect for diverse perspectives. This method ensures that decisions reflect the collective input of all members, fostering a sense of shared ownership, transparency, and accountability.

By addressing the varied concerns and priorities of stakeholders, consensus management leads to more inclusive, balanced, and sustainable outcomes while building trust, mutual respect, and long-term commitment among members.

In cases where consensus cannot be reached, particularly on sensitive or divisive issues, the topic will be referred to the national Cluster plenary meeting for further discussion and resolution through a majority vote.

The SAG maintains a strong commitment to two-way communication with the wider Cluster membership. All SAG decisions, strategic recommendations, and key outputs will be shared with Cluster members, ensuring broad engagement and transparency across the coordination platform.

VIII. DISQUALIFICATION AND REPLACEMENT OF MEMBERS:

SAG members are expected to demonstrate active engagement, reliability, and adherence to the agreed Terms of Reference (ToR).

Grounds for Disqualification

Members may be disqualified or replaced under the following circumstances:

- Failure to attend three consecutive SAG meetings without prior notification and a valid reason.
- Lack of active participation in SAG activities, discussions, or decision-making processes.
- Breach of the SAG's Terms of Reference or failure to fulfill agreed responsibilities.

Disqualification Procedure

If any of the above conditions are observed, the Cluster Coordinator may initiate a disqualification process, which includes:

- Issuing a formal written notice to the concerned organization, outlining the grounds for disqualification and offering an opportunity to respond within a specified period.
- Reviewing the response (if provided) in consultation with SAG members to assess the validity of the explanation.
- Determining the appropriate action, including, if necessary, a majority vote among the remaining SAG members to finalize the disqualification.
- Notifying the affected organization of the final decision and rationale.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Organizations may choose to forfeit their SAG membership voluntarily. In such cases, the organization should:

- Submit a **written notification** to the SAG, explaining the reason for withdrawal.
- **Fulfill any pending obligations** or commitments as agreed upon with the SAG.
- If applicable, ensure a **smooth handover** of ongoing responsibilities to a designated cluster member to minimize disruption.

Replacement Process

To maintain continuity and functionality, the following steps will be taken to replace a disqualified or withdrawing SAG member:

- **Priority consideration** will be given to organizations that had previously expressed interest in SAG membership, with the replacement recommended and endorsed by the SAG and shared with the wider cluster membership as an update.
- If no suitable replacement is available from previous applicants, the Cluster Coordinator will **issue an open call** for expressions of interest.
- Interested organizations will undergo the **same selection process** as outlined in the SAG election procedures.
- If needed, a **majority vote** by cluster members will determine the new SAG member.
- The newly appointed organization will **serve the remainder** of the original member's term.

IX. ELECTION PROCESS

- The election process for the interim SAG will be formally announced via email and presented during a Cluster meeting.
- Each interested organization must nominate one primary SAG focal point and one alternate to ensure consistent participation.
- If the number of interested organizations exceeds the number of available seats, a majority vote will be conducted. Each cluster member will be granted one vote, and organizations will be asked to designate a representative to participate in the voting process.
- In the event of a tie, the Cluster Coordinator will cast the deciding vote. This decision will be considered final.
- Interim SAG members will serve a three-month term. Depending on the evolving operational context and needs, this term may be extended to a two-year period through a more formalized and participatory election process.
- The SAG Terms of Reference (ToR) will be reviewed and revised periodically to ensure their ongoing relevance and adaptability to emerging challenges and priorities.

X. AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis or as required at the request of the SAG or cluster member. Membership shall be for a one-year period, extendable to an additional year.