# Global Shelter Cluster

# Teleconference 10 June 2016

## MINUTES

**Objective of the teleconference:** to take stock of the progress made by the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC), prepare for the upcoming GSC meeting in the first week of October, and inform about ongoing GSC initiatives.

**Participants:** 30 participants from 20 organizations including members of shelter cluster coordination teams from 5 countries. Full list in annex.

### Updates on key issues from the field

Brief presentations were made on two issues from two country level clusters on each of the topics:

* Lack of perceived importance of shelter and its coordination and consequences of this lack of recognition
* The word “coordination” and especially “Clusters” has too frequently negative connotations, particularly by management in the lead agency. Yet, in reality if it is done properly it can allow the cluster lead agency to be at the centre of a response, it does not need to be seen as a negative burden quite the opposite, but the necessary staffing resources *must* be given;
* Shelter is all too frequently viewed as a technical sector, rather than in what its wider value and implications can be. Shelter it could be argued, if done properly, operationalizes protection principles. So, rather than seeing shelter as a technical tangential sector, both from shelter and protection sides there should be an effort to engage, collaborate and mutually benefit. The provision of high-quality and suitable shelter can deliver more protection than a high-quality and suitable training to a group of IDPs on the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.
* There are varying degrees of donor engagement in the cluster, Nepal earthquake was a good example. Some organizations are able to raise funds and feel that they do not need to take part in the cluster to coordinate their activities.
* Strategic Aim 3 of the GSC Strategy 2013-2017 seeks to increase the understanding of shelter among other actors, particularly senior management. While important efforts have been made, more still needs to be done.
* Support to shelter cluster partners on cash and shelter and need for awareness raising on challenges to meet shelter objectives with unconditional cash.
* It remains a struggle to find appropriate experts who understand both cash and shelter and can undertake market assessments and other related activities. This also means understanding that shelter is more than distributing tents and tarps, but links in to recovery and reconstruction. Key documents on this are the [GSC Position Paper on Cash and Markets in the Shelter Sector](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gsc_position_paper_cash_and_markets_in_the_shelter_sector.pdf), the [literature review](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/literature_review_of_cash_in_shelter.pdf), and the study on [information management implications of using cash for shelter](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/cash_based_programmes_for_shelter_and_nfi.pdf) that has just been released.
* The cash working group in Ukraine is now and independent structure as decided by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), this seems to be the case in more and more countries. Consistency and sustainability of cash working groups structure is a problem. The IASC asked the World Bank to analyze cash coordination. The [resulting report, “Cash Transfers in Humanitarian Settings”](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2016/06/16/090224b0843d0638/1_0/Rendered/PDF/Strategic0note0umanitarian0contexts.pdf) highlights the inconsistencies in cash coordination and recommends that clusters still make the strategic decisions but an inter-cluster working group provides technical support to clusters on cash. Cash also serves as a lens to highlight challenges in the implementation of a response. No concrete solutions are in place yet.
* Multipurpose cash grants (or unconditional cash grants) are being pushed in different situations because the assumption is that they are more efficient and give greater choice to beneficiaries. However, technical nuances are not always understood. The current expertise of those involved in cash is mostly based on food security. Cash is a good modality, but only if used properly. When cash is used for shelter, mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that standards are met and that shelters and their materials meet certain degree of quality so that they will not cause harm to their inhabitants.

### Updates on the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) activities and WHS

The five year [GSC Strategy 2013-2017](http://sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/GSC%20Strategy%202013-2017.pdf) is finishing at the end of next year. Three strategic aims (support to country level clusters, improved functioning of GSC, improved advocacy). The structures in place to support the implementation of this strategy are:

* a [GSC Support Team](https://www.sheltercluster.org/what_we_do) with dedicated personnel acting as a secretariat,
* a [Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)](https://www.sheltercluster.org/strategic-advisory/global-strategic-advisory-group) which includes 10 agencies and meets every month to provide strategic guidance,
* [Working Groups](https://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/active-working-groups) that address concrete and time bound pieces of work as agreed by the SAG,
* and [Communities of Practice (COPs)](http://www.sheltercluster.org/communities-of-practice) to provide technical assistance and guidance to the field through the [Helpdesk](https://www.sheltercluster.org/helpdesk), these are the most recent addition.

A brief update was provided on the different working groups as follows:

* [**Shelter and Cash WG**](http://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/shelter-and-cash-working-group) led by Habitat for Humanity: this was the first WG to formally kick off after SAG retreat. It completed the [GSC Position Paper on Cash and Markets in the Shelter Sector](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gsc_position_paper_cash_and_markets_in_the_shelter_sector.pdf), the [literature review](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/literature_review_of_cash_in_shelter.pdf), and the study on [information management implications of using cash for shelter](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/cash_based_programmes_for_shelter_and_nfi.pdf) . Inputs have been provided to the CaLP position paper, World Bank document “Cash Transfers in Humanitarian Settings” and to the Grand Bargain. Facilitated CaLP and Sphere event as well as a CashCap training event. Lobbying and pushing shelter and cash issues, active in CaLP Dgroup. More WG members are welcome, at the moment the WG consists of IOM, UNHCR, IFRC and HFH.
* [**Shelter Projects WG**](http://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/shelter-projects-2015-2016-working-group) led by IOM: regular compilation of case studies, now in its fifth year (2015-2016). It used to be co-led by IFRC, UNHCR and UNHABITAT but it is now under the GSC umbrella. The deadline for the publication is Q1 2017, document funders are IFRC, UNHCR, USAID/OFDA, UNHABITAT, IOM, Habitat for Humanity and World Vision. Additional current WG members are CENDEP, CRS, CARE international, NRC, ALNAP, and selected independents with a good overview of the project. Abstracts representing practice at national level are still welcome and can be submitted at: <http://www.sheltercasestudies.org/submit.html>.
* [**Construction standards WG**](http://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/construction-standards-working-group) led by Save the Children: aims to develop harmonized set of non-technical standards for construction processes that can be adopted in any context, and that will inform a consistent position on construction due diligence that agencies can commit to.
* [**GBV and shelter WG**](http://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/gbv-shelter-programming-working-group) co-led by CARE and IOM: both GBV and shelter are about safety, dignity, health etc. The WG is looking to create a toolkit for shelter practitioners to support GBV risk reduction in shelter operations. The deadline for the toolkit is September and a sub-working group on site planning and GBV has been established. Participants interested in joining can contact Joseph Ashmore at jashmore@iom.int.
* [**Non Food Items (NFI) Practices WG**](http://www.sheltercluster.org/working-group/working-group-nfi-practices) co-led by UNHCR and IFRC: this WG is about gathering and disseminating good practice on NFI programming, Corinne Treherne (corinne.treherne@ifrc.org) and Gregg McDonald (mcdonaldg@unhcr.org) are co-chairing it. Only two expressions of interest received so far, more are welcome.

An update was provided on the [**World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)**](https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/key-documents)

The WHS was well attended with around 9,000 people from 173 member states of which 55 heads of state. A number of commitments were made and initiatives were launched, some of which are very relevant for the shelter sector. The key documents are:

* The [**Chair’s Summary**](https://consultations2.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/5171492e71696bcf9d4c571c93dfc6dcd7f361ee?vid=581078&disposition=inline&op=view) captures the main conclusions around 5 broad themes:
	1. Political leadership to prevent and end conflict
	2. Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity: adherence to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, commitment to international standards.
	3. Leave no one behind: a new approach to address the needs of those displaced by reducing the gap between humanitarian and development.
	4. Change people’s lives – from delivering aid to ending need: treating people affected by crises as partners, not as beneficiaries, increase the funding provided to local actors, linking humanitarian action and development, importance of early warning, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation, the Connecting Business Initiative, and the [Commitment to Action on collaborating in a New Way of Working](https://consultations2.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/50b4cd3ad07469f44235f8a4c60353dfda17dbb0?vid=581741&disposition=inline&op=view).
	5. Invest in Humanity: increase predictable financing including to increase CERF to 1 billion USD, the Grand Bargain, channel 25% of financing to national and local responders as directly as possible by 2020, and scale up the use of cash transfers.
* The [**Global Alliance for Urban Crises**](http://unhabitat.org/global-alliance-for-urban-crises/) was launched with the mayor of Istanbul as the keynote speaker. This alliance aims to improve urban evidence base, create a pool of urban responders, promote urban resilience and other related initiatives. It highlights the role of municipalities, along with governments in population movements.
* The [**Grand Bargain**](https://consultations2.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/075d4c18b82e0853e3d393e90af18acf734baf29?vid=581058&disposition=inline&op=view): greater transparency, appropriate data analysis, more funding for local actors, multi-year funding, simpler reporting procedures, increased use of cash, avoiding duplication across the board, joint needs assessments, improving leadership and governance mechanisms, reducing earmarked donor contributions, enhance collaboration between humanitarian and development actors.

During the WHS there was a discussion on the need for technical expertise but not on the technical issues themselves. The Urban Alliance is the most technically specific commitment coming out of the WHS. There were no technical implications as such for the sector, so there is space for the sector to advance on these issues. The cluster system will need to make adjustments to the way it works in order to implement the recommendations mentioned in these documents. ALNAP is hosting a meeting at the beginning of July to discuss the consequences of the WHS for clusters in terms of joint assessments, cash programming, etc. The GSC will try to participate. Similar work will be done in the coming months both at the Global Cluster Coordinators Group which brings together all the clusters and at the GSC SAG.

1. **Update on GSC global meeting and the Cluster Strategy Review**

A review of the [GSC Strategy 2013-2017](http://sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/GSC%20Strategy%202013-2017.pdf) will take place in the coming weeks/months, the strategy is now halfway through being implemented, so this exercise will allow the GSC to identify areas where more needs to be done or look at new issues arising from WHS that should be included.

A number of Shelter events, including the GSC meeting and the Coordination Workshop will take place during the first week of October (3-7 October). A short GSC survey will be shared soon with less than 10 questions to receive feedback on the GSC performance and on issues to be discussed during the GSC meeting.

One of the cluster coordinators recommended that one of the issues that should be included in the Coordination Workshop is a discussion on the Cluster Performance Monitoring Tool. This tool should be simpler. When implemented in their country, the response rate was too low to get meaningful results, too many questions, difficult to get buy in. No attendance to workshop that was organized. A lighter version should be considered to make this exercise more meaningful. Certain conditions should be met before going for the full-fledged exercise and when to go for a light version. It was agreed to discuss these points during the cluster coordination workshop, after which the process can perhaps be improved together with other clusters. The GSC uses a very short questionnaire to receive feedback, which can perhaps serve as an example.

1. **Launch of the GSC Helpdesk and Communities of Practice**

The [GSC Helpdesk](http://www.sheltercluster.org/helpdesk) has been launched. It will facilitate access to expertise on a range of issues relevant to shelter practice. This helpdesk draws the knowledge from the GSC [Communities of Practice](http://www.sheltercluster.org/communities-of-practice). More information will be provided through a global update.

**ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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