

Global Shelter Cluster Meeting Notes

Geneva, October 8 – 9, 2014 (*The agenda can be found [here](#)*)

Day 1 – Strategic Aim 1: Support to Country Level Coordination

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks:

The year 2014 has seen an unprecedented level of disasters with five L3 emergencies. The original cluster planning as set-up by the IASC in 2005 had been for a maximum of three L3 emergencies with only two happening at the same time in the same region. With the current system being hard pressed, the GSC meeting could be an opportunity to review it. Four issues were highlighted to guide the work on the next days:

1. How can the GSC contribute to the overall humanitarian architecture through the IASC and Global Cluster Coordinators Group
2. How to maintain sustainability of the cluster as it requires everyone's contributions and remains a fragile construct
3. How to better leverage opportunities of the GSC as a global platform
4. What are the three key messages the shelter sector can send out to non-shelter sectors and the humanitarian community

2. Is the GSC on the road to a more responsive & flexible support to country-level clusters? ([Background documentation](#))

This session provided an overview of the implementation of the Strategic Aim 1 of the [GSC Strategy 2013-2017](#). This was done through a [presentation](#) and a discussion, summarized as follows:

- Shelter clusters and cluster like mechanisms are activated in 24 countries, of which at least 17 were present in the room.
- A total of four operations are classified Level 3 system-wide emergencies (Syria, CAR, South Sudan, and Iraq) while the Philippines is not classified as an L3 anymore.
- The GSC has provided surge capacity support to country-level clusters through the deployment of components of the [Support Team](#) ([Global Focal Points](#) and [Regional Focal Points](#)). These deployments are detailed in the [GSC 2013 Achievements Report](#) and in the [GSC Dashboard for Regional and Global Focal Points](#).
- Given the high number of emergencies, [Regional Focal Points](#) were deployed as surge capacity more than initially expected. Their deployments are coordinated with the [Global Focal Points](#) and depend on various factors such as specific language skills, availability, relevant experience, technical skills, etc. Contingency planning is conducted in countries with and without clusters and follows IASC procedures. The case of the Latin America and Caribbean region is especial since there is already a regional coordinating body established (RedLac). The Regional Focal Point for the Americas handed over to the Regional Shelter Coordinator for the Shelter Working Group in RedLac which is effectively the [regional shelter cluster](#).

Pre-meeting survey

The session was closed by [presenting](#) the results of the [pre-meeting survey](#). Respondent's satisfaction with the GSC was high (>75%). Issues identified to be addressed by the GSC were:

addressing recovery issues, rapid mechanisms for the assessment of needs and distribution of NFIs, addressing preparedness, and lack of government counterparts.

3. Country level cluster coordination: Key challenges and creative solutions – Panel discussion

Chair: Jake Zarins, GSC SAG Member (NRC)

Panelists:

- Edward Benson, benson@unhcr.org Shelter Cluster Coordinator Myanmar (UNHCR)
- Victoria Stodart, victoria.stodart@ifrc.org Shelter Cluster Coordinator Philippines (IFRC)
- Rafaele Robelin, rrobelin@iom.int Shelter Cluster Coordinator Haiti (IOM)

Each panelist answered a question identified from the pre-meeting survey. Below are some of the key points:

- **How is the relation between shelter technical knowledge and coordination in the cluster you lead?**
Leadership and coordination skills are more important in a cluster coordinator than technical skills. These technical skills can be found within the cluster partners or receiving support. Particularly in large scale disasters, where a team of people is needed, the cluster coordinator can be supported by a technical coordinator. In small scale disasters only one person might be needed, ideally with all skills which is difficult to find. In summary, technical skills are preferable for cluster coordinators but not required.
- **How does your cluster engage with national actors and governments?**
It is difficult for governments to take ownership in the short time that clusters are usually activated, particularly after natural disasters. A transitory phasing-out approach would be preferable to a deactivation. A focus at municipal level has proven to be easier and more efficient in certain contexts such as the Philippines.
- **Have you developed a common need assessment and response methodology? Can you elaborate about main challenges involved?**
The most significant challenges faced by the SC for the coordination of assessments were the scale of the disaster, the geography of the country, the lack of openness of agencies to share their assessment data, and the number of partners involved. Some concerns were shared on the usefulness of MIRA's information compared with the effort that the shelter cluster inputted to it, particularly in the Philippines' case. There were questions on the audience of the assessments and the difficulty to achieve everyone's expectation. The difference between quick onset disasters from prolonged crisis was also highlighted, and that multi-sectorial assessments better work for latter as larger time frames allow for better coordination.

4. Meet the country clusters

The following clusters shared their experience and products in a market-like setting. Click on the country to access their webpage:

First round (before lunch):

[Afghanistan](#), [Chad](#), [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), [El Salvador](#), [Myanmar](#), [Nepal](#), [Syria](#), [Kenya](#), [South Sudan](#)

Second round (after lunch):

[Central African Republic](#), [Haiti](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Americas](#), [Mali](#), [Somalia](#), [Philippines](#), [Sudan](#).

5. Next steps on a more responsive and flexible support

Discussions were held in break-out groups on a number of topics. These topics were identified based on the preferences expressed at the [pre-meeting survey](#) and those outputs from the GSC Strategy Strategic Aim 1 that had been less advanced. The topics were the following:

1. Shelter Recovery
2. Rapid mechanism for assessment and distribution of NFIs
3. Preparedness
4. Lack of government counterpart
5. Knowledge, Standards
6. Wish list of technical expertise

The detailed summary of the discussions in each break-out group can be found [here](#).

Day 2 – Strategic Aims 2 & 3: Global cluster and advocacy

1. Appointment of the new Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

The GSC co-leads thank the members of the GSC SAG in 2014 for their work. A global update was sent prior to the GSC meeting calling for expressions of interest to be part of the SAG. The members of the SAG for 2015 were selected among the organizations that expressed interest and according to the criteria outlined in the SAG [Terms of Reference](#).

The members of the SAG for 2015 will be:

- Co-chairs: IFRC and UNHCR
- ACTED
- Australian Red Cross
- CARE International
- Habitat for Humanity
- InterAction
- IOM
- NRC
- UNHABITAT
- World Vision International

More information on the SAG can be found [here](#). The SAG will have a retreat on 8-9 December to review the past year and plan for the coming years.

2. Are we headed for a well-functioning and understood GSC?

This session provided an overview of the implementation of the Strategic Aims 2 and 3 of the [GSC Strategy 2013-2017](#). This was done through a presentation and a discussion. The presentations can be found here:

- [Strategic Aim 2](#)
- [Strategic Aim 3](#)

3. Meet the Global Shelter Cluster

The different components of the GSC shared their experience with participants in a market-like setting. The following components were present, click on them to find more information on their websites:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Accountability Working Group | • Communities of Practice |
| • Regulatory Barriers to the Provision of Shelter Working Group | • Support Team |
| • Shelter in Recovery Working Group | • SAG |
| • Outreach & Capacity Working Group | • Global Cluster Coordinators |
| • Innovation & Technical Working Group | |

4. Towards a Settlement Approach

Chair: Kip Scheidler, GSC SAG Member (Habitat for Humanity)

Panelists:

- Loretta Hieber-Girardet, Chief of the Inter Cluster Coordination Section (OCHA)
- Betsy Lippman, Chief of the Operational Solutions and Transition Section (UNHCR)
- Nuno Nunes, Global CCCM Cluster Coordinator (IOM)
- Kimberly Roberson, Global CCCM Cluster Coordinator (UNHCR)
- David Evans, Emergency Director and GSC SAG Member (UNHABITAT)
- Brett Moore, Shelter and Infrastructure Advisor and GSC SAG Member (World Vision International)

The background presentation can be found [here](#).

5. Next steps on a well-functioning and understood GSC

Discussions were held in break-out groups on a number of topics. These topics were identified based on the preferences expressed at the [pre-meeting survey](#) and outputs from the GSC Strategy Strategic Aims 2 and 3. The topics were the following:

1. Cash and Shelter
2. Prepositioning of shelter relief products including shelter-related NFIs
3. Training and capacity building
4. Human resources
5. Capacity building of local authorities
6. Improve support from GSC
7. Advocacy key messages that the GSC should pass in 2015

A more detailed summary of the discussions in each break-out group can be found [here](#).