



# Terms of reference

## REDLAC-Shelter Working group

### Background

At a regional level, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinates the working group on Risk, Emergencies and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), which facilitates a more coherent inter-institutional preparedness, from the regional to the country level. For all members, the participation of regional leaders of sectoral groups (also called clusters) is playing an important role in facilitating the understanding and development of appropriate mechanisms when responding to emergencies. Established in 2003 and inspired by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main strategy of the group is to improve the regional response to disasters in the region, through a consensual approach, highlighting better coordination and exchange of information. Based on the global cluster system, REDLAC has established subgroups that are active depending on the circumstances. This has been done for technical areas such as Water and Hygiene (WASH), or Emergency Housing (Shelter), as well as for cross-cutting areas such as Protection and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM).

Shelter is the humanitarian process by which people affected by a crisis regain the right to adequate housing. Housing recovery begins immediately: households begin the process of rebuilding their lives as soon as possible, especially after natural disasters. Aspects involved in this process include household-related non-food items (NFIs), emergency and long-term shelter support, housing construction and reconstruction, as well as human settlement support such as site and urban planning. A variety of methods are included in the humanitarian process to provide support in these areas, which may or may not involve construction. Emergency shelter options vary by context, protection aspects, weather and other conditions and are defined in collaboration with local governments following the regulations in force.

The REDLAC-Shelter group was active for a few years, but slowed down since mid-2016, and remained without a coordinator since the end of 2016, becoming virtually inactive since then. In view of this, along other actions, these Terms of Reference aim to contribute to the revival of this group, which has been requested for various reasons:

- Since 2005, the Humanitarian Reform requests the creation of clusters at global and regional levels, to increase the coordination of humanitarian interventions, and improve the predictability of such coordination. This structure has been ratified; the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC), jointly led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), continues to be the platform for coordination amongst agencies active in operations of human settlements and emergency shelter. The GSC and emergency shelter



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clusters at country level work collectively with national actors to support communities affected by natural disasters and those internally displaced by conflicts, with timely, predictable, and effective emergency shelter responses. The GSC 2018-2022 strategy prioritizes four main pillars of work: (1) Coordination; (2) Advocacy for the sector; (3) Evidence-based response and (4) Capacity.

- In recent years, the absence of coordination in this sector has been manifest in several emergencies that occurred in the region, some at subregional scale. Hence, it has been suggested to explore the reactivation of the group at regional level.
- During preparedness exercises at country level, there is no clear leader in the shelter sector; as a result, the sector as a whole is often excluded or merged into the cross-cutting Protection or Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) clusters. Therefore, it is necessary to advocate for a clear, greater and continuous presence of this sector at regional level, and by extension, also at subregional and national level. This would lead to greater clarity in the identification and communication amongst agencies at country level in the event of an emergency. Although activities carried out during preparation stages do not require high levels of coordination, the absence or confusion of emergency shelter with other sectors during preparation work, leads to greater demand for coordination during the response phase, as well as clarity in the roles and responsibilities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian actions, including emergency shelter.

### Purpose

To improve the coordination and predictability of actions, roles and responsibilities carried out by different shelter actors, and with the other sectors at regional level to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and suitability of interventions in countries affected by disasters.

### Specific objectives

- To structure and update the network of participants in the sector in Latin America, supporting understanding of their roles, responsibilities, capacities and interventions at different levels: national, subregional, regional and global. Specifically, to identify their capabilities to support sectoral coordination.
- To promote coordinated work with other groups already established in REDLAC at all stages of humanitarian work, following the premise of protection in humanitarian action. Within this framework, to promote actions to ensure that assistance reaches as many affected people as possible, considering the long-term impact and the support of local recovery strategies.
- To carry out capacity development activities and training in preparation and response, promoting the application and contextualization of global instruments and tools at regional



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and national levels. To participate in the development of relevant policies, standards, guidelines and sector-related documents to increase coherence and suitability in humanitarian action.

- To promote the exchange of knowledge and tools among the members of the sector, so as to ensure adequate technical and strategic advice in any event that require humanitarian assistance.
- To strengthen the sector's response towards affected communities by prioritizing the most vulnerable groups, supporting self-recovery and promoting accountability mechanisms towards beneficiary populations.
- To advocate for the consideration and inclusion of shelter needs and preparedness in contingency plans, action plans, response mechanisms and government policies. To advocate for an increased participation of the sector in country and even local-level mechanisms as part of the humanitarian platform.
- Strengthen the linkages with authorities, partners, academia and civil society, in the preparation and response to crisis.

### Methodology and Coordination

The REDLAC-Shelter Group will operate following concrete objectives and results defined by consensus among its active members and reflected on a workplan.

The work plan, objectives and results will be reviewed and updated annually. To include new activities in the work plan, they must be concrete and have clear timelines and indicators of execution, in order to measure their progress, as far as possible. Each activity shall have one or various persons in charge.

Group meetings will be convened by teleconference, for all interested members to attend. These will be regular, in principle monthly, with the main objective of carrying out a joint and coordinated review of the state of progress of the plan, and all members and the global group of the sector will be informed in a timely manner. Whenever possible, preferably at least once a year, a face-to-face workshop will be organized in Panama or another place agreed by the group, to address the most relevant issues in depth, encourage all people in the group to meet in person and, if it will be considered necessary to support capacity development.

When necessary, extraordinary meetings may be convened to support the sectorial coordination of emergency operations, or to address urgent matters related to the sector.

The Americas Regional Office of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will be the lead agency conveying the REDLAC-Shelter group.



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### **Members**

All organizations working in the Americas region interested in the settlement and shelter sector, whether non-governmental organizations, members of the Red Cross Movement (National Societies, International Committee or International Federation), United Nations agencies, universities, donors or others, will be participants of the REDLAC-Shelter working group.

### **Financing**

Members of the REDLAC-Shelter group are expected to self-finance their participation and contributions to the Working Group. The lead agency will be responsible for ensuring the administrative and logistical support necessary for regular and extraordinary meetings to be carried out efficiently and in an inclusive manner.

For the activities programmed in the work plan, the strategy to obtain additional funds will be specified on a case-by-case basis, depending on the need. In case that funds required surpass members' capacities, the leaders will be responsible for coordinating and promoting fund mobilization.