

## Global Shelter Cluster Advocacy and Communications and strategic action plan July 2021- September 2022

### 1. Situation analysis

While humanitarian and specifically shelter needs have increased significantly over the last few years, delivering adequate shelter assistance has become more challenging due to several major obstacles, including systematic underfunding and access impediments. Nonetheless the recognised importance within the humanitarian sector of shelter and NFIs services, and the documented impact it can have on the quality of other humanitarian programming, there is an overall sense that the sector can benefit from a boost in advocacy and communications efforts amid the current global humanitarian context.

Advocacy has always been part of the core activities of and was also included as one of the 4 strategic objectives of the Global Shelter Cluster Strategy 2018-2022, with well identified expected results, outcomes, outputs and indicators. This has translated in the strengthening of advocacy tools and the implementation of numerous actions to support the advocacy efforts. Therefore, this current document does not propose a separate strategy but a strategic action plan which will guide the “**boost**” to achieve the objectives of the advocacy work of the GSC set out in the Strategy 2018-2022.



The proposed actions in this strategic action plan are based on an in-depth review and analysis conducted between June and August 2021. Both internal communication and IM procedures were reviewed, as well as the existing tools and resources and over 40 interviews were conducted with GSC staff, country cluster coordinators, SAG partners and external actors to understand the needs and gaps.

The main findings are:

- The GSC is well known within the humanitarian sector and the GSC team counts with an excellent reputation among the shelter and settlements practitioners. Partners and external actors recognize the high technical quality products the GSC delivers and expressed having confidence in the work of the GSC. However, there was an overall feeling that the shelter practitioners are doing a great job at “talking to themselves”, but that communications and advocacy work external to the S&S sector and cluster coordination architecture needs to go further to ensure the recognition is increased, especially seen the important links with fundraising.
- A foundation for the communications and visibility work was laid back in 2013 by a communication officer through a strategy, tools (including social media accounts) and several templates. Since there has been no dedicated communication staff over the last 8 years, the tasks have been fragmented among the GSC support team over time, with not always a formalization of tasks and responsibilities among the GSC support team for internal and external communication related activities. The review showed however that some of the communication channels (for example the Twitter and Facebook accounts) have been organically and successfully exploited, but the GSC could benefit from a boost through updating some of the existing tools (guidelines, website and some templates) and through structured content management planning for the external communication and advocacy work.
- In relation to the advocacy activities, information management processes exist to gather the necessary data, and several templates and platforms have been updated over the years to support the dissemination of the information. The rich amount of information and data collected has been used to inform external actors on the situation and gaps of the operations. The analysis indicated that the effectiveness of the advocacy actions is sometimes limited due to the time necessary between receiving and processing the data, and the ability to adapt the information to communication and advocacy content. In addition, the GSC strategy 2018-2022 had foreseen, besides the recruitment of a GFP Advocacy, other roles to support with the advocacy objectives, namely a GFP for Grant Management, Donor Engagement and Resource Mobilization as well as Cash and Shelter GFP and a 25% dedicated GFP for Urban Response, which limited the implementation of the advocacy activities since 2018.

The findings of the review have guided the development of this strategic action plan, which will contribute through three complementary, progressive and structured workflows to achieve the objectives of the GSC strategy 2018-2022 and the objectives defined in the respective donor grants over the next 16 months.

## 2. Workflows

The overall objective of the communication and advocacy work set out in the GSC strategy 2018-2022 is **to increase the recognition of the shelter and settlement in humanitarian response and recovery**. Four specific results had been identified in the 2018-2022, with according to outputs, outcomes and indicators at three levels (global, country and agency level):

2.1. Importance of shelter and settlement	2.2. Engagement	2.3. Response funding	2.4. Influencing
Strengthened understanding of shelter and settlement's critical multi-sectoral impact.	Increased donor and agency engagement and support for shelter and settlements sector.	Critical funding and response gaps are monitored, communicated and supported.	Engaging others: appropriate urban assistance, cash and markets-based programming, area-based approaches.

Considering the remaining timeframe (16 months until December 2022), the capacity of the current GSC support team, the need to align the objectives with the current grants of BHA and ECHO, and the changed global context since 2018, three workflows are proposed to mainstream communications and advocacy work within the GSC:

1. Increase the visibility of the GSC and its partners and strengthen the engagement of stakeholders.	2. Support to country-level clusters with advocacy and communications activities.	3. Advocacy on identified priority research topics and in collaboration with existing CoPs and WGs.
Aligned to the <b>global results 2.1 to 2.4</b> of the GSC 2018-2022 strategy, the increase in structured and more frequent communications through the strengthened existing channels (website, social media and Global Updates) will contribute to increasing the visibility of the GSC and the S&S actors, as well as to strengthen the engagement with external actors. A specific activity will also be to liaise frequently with the lead agencies and SAG members to leverage on their communication and influencing capacity to maximize the networking impact.	Activities under this workflow will be supporting the <b>country level results 2.1 to 2.4</b> . Some specific tools were created to support the country teams in structuring communications and advocacy work. These include templates, guidelines and other tools which will be shared and updated regularly with the country cluster coordinators. In addition, based on the needs and opportunities, some additional support for communications and advocacy specific tasks can be considered depending of the crisis.	This activity will support all the activities related to the <b>R 2.1 and 2.4 at global level</b> . In close collaboration with the GFP for research and the leads and co-leads of CoPs and WGs, advocacy plans will be elaborated, and communication outputs will be produced based on the research plan and any opportunities that will arise. With the Working Group and CoP leads, and based on their requests, advocacy and communication tools can be created as well.

All these three workflows will **contribute to increase progressively and sustainably the recognition of the shelter and settlement in humanitarian response and recovery, which can result in increased funding and improved shelter responses and facilitate humanitarian shelter responders to assist more people with adequate shelter**. Each workflow will have a specific set of tasks and activities detailed in annex 1, but it is important to note the important **interconnexion** between the three workflows and the **collective efforts** this requires. Communications and advocacy are most impactful and sustainable when they are mainstreamed in other organizations activities.

## 3. Target audiences, allies and partners

There are two main types of target audiences for the communications and advocacy activities which can have different roles and can be declined as follow:

Internal	The Global Support Team composed by UNHCR, IFRC and seconded staff	Allies
	The partners and members of the SAG, leads and co-leads of working groups and Community of practices	Allies/partners
	The country cluster coordinators and teams	Allies/Partners

External	Donor representatives: traditional and non-traditional, multilateral...	Targets
	Authorities of the countries where the GSC's members are operating	Targets and partners
	Humanitarian practitioners: IASC actors, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, bilateral cooperation actors	Targets, allies and partners
	Private sector	Targets
	Shelter practitioners not yet in the GSC's network	Targets
	Researchers and academics	Allies and partners
	Affected populations	Allies and partners

For each type of communication or advocacy action, initial target audiences will be defined with the concerned stakeholders for the global level, and more precise target audiences will be detailed in the specific advocacy plans. *It is important to note that over time the target audiences can shift, so the analysis of audiences needs to be continuous.*

#### 4. Actions and tools

A more detailed list of actions and tools is detailed per workflow in the annexes, but overall they will have the common focus on facilitating the creation of content for more visibility and engagement. Some of the activities which will be implemented to achieve the results and objectives are:

- Supporting the internal communications of the GST through regular information-sharing and briefing of GST support team on communication and advocacy related activities;
- Monitoring of the context(s) to identify opportunities for engagement and informing the GST on any important trends;
- Establishing and updating [a calendar to program communications and advocacy actions](#) and identify new opportunities;
- Participating and/or facilitating meetings related to communications and advocacy activities;
- Constant review and updating of documents and tools as per the needs: based on the changing contexts, [tools and templates](#) can be adapted as required.
- Regular contacts with country coordinators, working group and Community of Practice leads and co-leads to respond to requests for support and to actively propose content;
- Frequent updating of social media accounts (see [social media strategy](#) for more details);
- Support with the development of statements, policy briefs, key messaging, social media and advocacy outputs;
- Development of advocacy and communication plans with concerned stakeholders for specific actions/activities and as per needs.

Some of the current tools will be reviewed and adapted when necessary, and new ones can be created based on the needs and specific requests.

#### 5. Sign-off procedures for risks mitigation

Communications and advocacy done through publicly accessible channels can bring important risks for the actors involved in the actions, with for the GSC can be mainly **security, relationship and reputational risks**.

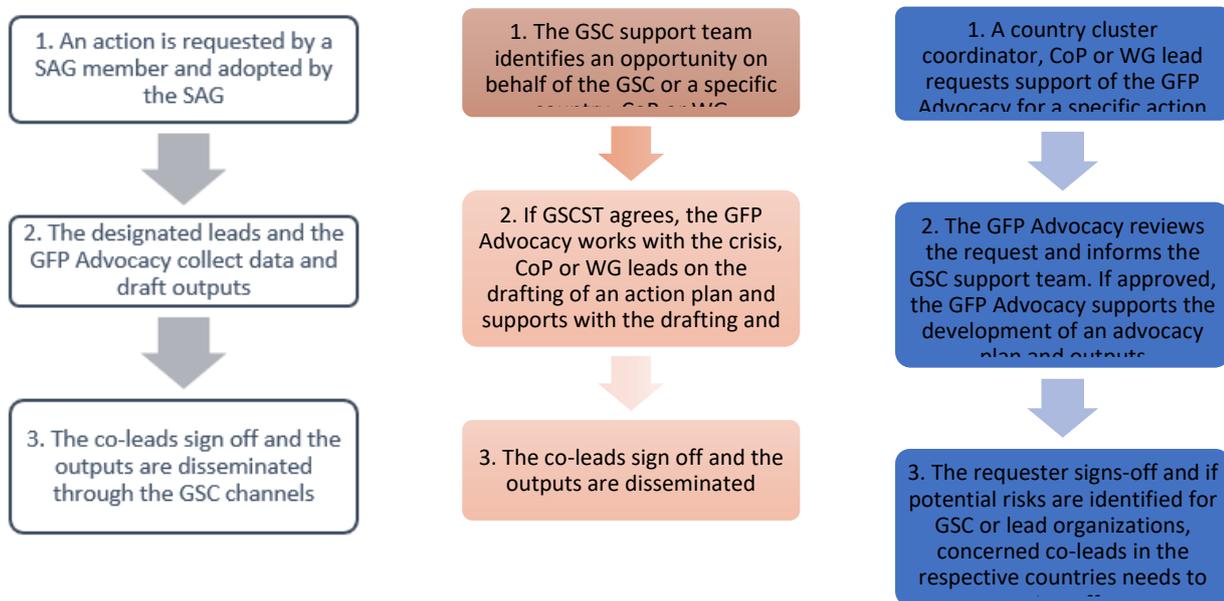
Although the Shelter Cluster at the Global level might not be directly at risk of security incidents, some of the communications and advocacy at Global or country level could lead to security risks for the colleagues based in the countries.

As for relational risks, some communications which might be perceived as more critical towards some actors, such as humanitarian leadership or authorities, can have serious consequences. Likewise, when information is shared which is not factual or complete, this can lead to reputational risks and loss of credibility.

It is therefore important to ensure that sign-off procedures exist to mitigate these risks when some situations are identified as possibly sensitive. The advocacy and communication basis will always have as a first entry point what is publicly shared on the website, but other products can be developed depending of the situation, which might require a "sign-off" from the actors involved. For communications and advocacy work on specific countries or crises identified as opportunities by the GFP Advocacy, it is recommended that the cluster coordinators or spokespersons are consulted and validate the messaging before sharing it externally to ensure no negative consequences can occur.

Likewise, for some specific communication and advocacy actions on request or on behalf of CoPs or WGs, a consultation and validation process will be necessary. At global level, an OK from each co-lead will be necessary for positionings on behalf of the GSC.

**3 possible scenarios when sign-off procedures are necessary:**



**6. Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring will be done by the GFPA, who will regularly present updates to the GSCST on some indicators, and on request to the SAG, on the activities being implemented. Mid-year updates will be included as well in the GSC’s reports and through the donor reporting processes.

Some of the indicators which will be considered to assess the implementation of the strategic action plan will be:

- The number of strategic documents, advocacy plans, tools, templates and other communication and advocacy products produced and successfully disseminated;
- The number of communications and emails sent, and meetings attended;
- The number of followers on social media, visitors of the website and subscribers to the global updates since June 2021;
- The number of requests from country level cluster coordinators responded to;
- Satisfaction of partners on the advocacy and communications work.

<b>Result 1: The GSC and the shelter and settlement internal and external communication activities are strengthened</b>					
<i>Specific objectives</i>	<i>Target Audiences</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Outputs (by end of September 2022)</i>	<i>Expected outcomes</i>
<b>R1.1. The GSC support team and partners count with the necessary tools to strengthen the advocacy and communication activities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leads and co-leads teams</li> <li>SAG members</li> <li>Country cluster coordinators</li> <li>WG and CoP leads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes, sign-off procedures and roles are defined and clear to all stakeholders.</li> <li>Tools are developed and disseminated.</li> <li>Development of a social media strategy and accompanying content management plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings;</li> <li>Emails;</li> <li>Newsletter;</li> <li><a href="#">Branding and style guidelines</a> updated;</li> <li><a href="#">Advocacy plan template</a>;</li> <li><a href="#">Donor mapping tool</a>;</li> <li><a href="#">Social media strategy</a> including guidelines;</li> <li>Meeting reports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 strategic action plan;</li> <li>1 inception report;</li> <li>1 Social Media strategy;</li> <li>1 updated branding guidelines;</li> <li>6 advocacy plans (topics to be defined according to research priorities and with CoPs/WGs leads and co-leads).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An updated communication and advocacy strategic action plan exists.</li> <li>All communication and advocacy tools were reviewed and updated as needed.</li> <li>Partners and members have access to the communication and advocacy tools and are informed timely of progress.</li> </ul>
<b>R1.2. The visibility of the S&amp;S sector is increased.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other shelter and settlement actors working in the same areas.</li> <li>Humanitarian coordination actors: IASC, EDG, OCHA, other global clusters, coordination mechanisms in the countries,...</li> <li>Donors;</li> <li>Governments (national, local) – but to be assessed;</li> <li>Media representatives (to be defined per region).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update of the existing communication and advocacy tools: factsheets, brochures, presentation formats, website and dashboards,...</li> <li>Develop templates for donor briefings and media work.</li> <li>Active outreach to policymakers, donor representatives and media representatives (2022).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website;</li> <li>Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube;</li> <li>Media library;</li> <li>Templates (factsheets, dashboard, donor and media briefings);</li> <li>Calendar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of visitors to website increased;</li> <li>Number of followers of Twitter and LinkedIn accounts increased (see SM strategy for baseline);</li> <li>Reach of posts and engagement on social media increased (see baseline).</li> <li>12 communication products are developed (1 per month from September 2021 to September 2022).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The GSC team and partners have the needed tools available to ensure external communication and representation work.</li> <li>Joint campaigns are organized based on inputs of partners and GSC members.</li> </ul>

<p><b>R1.3. The engagement with key stakeholders is enhanced.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shelter practitioners (not yet in GSC's network).</li> <li>● Humanitarian stakeholders: lead agencies, partner agencies, OCHA, other Global clusters.</li> <li>● Traditional donor representatives: USAID/BHA, ECHO, FCDO, SIDA, SDC, WB and governments.</li> <li>● Non-traditional donors: to be defined by region, WorldBank, development actors and more precise lists to be specified per region based on funding analysis.</li> <li>● Private sector – technical stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outreach to non-traditional stakeholders.</li> <li>● Mapping of stakeholders and active outreach with tailored tools and products;</li> <li>● Following and engagement strategy on social media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regularly updated contact lists;</li> <li>● Donor mapping matrix tool;</li> <li>● Briefs, key messages, emails.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of contacts of key policymakers;</li> <li>● Number of interactions with new key policymakers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The outreach of the GSC is larger with new key policymakers and decisionmakers within reach of the GSC support team.</li> <li>● An increase in constructive interactions with the new key policymakers and decisionmakers.</li> </ul>
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**Result 2: Support to country-level clusters with advocacy and communications activities – aligned with 2.3 SO**

<i>Specific objectives</i>	<i>Target Audiences</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
<b>Country cluster coordinators are supported on communication and advocacy activities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leads and co-leads teams</li> <li>SAG members</li> <li>Country cluster coordinators</li> <li>WG and CoP leads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes, sign-off procedures and roles are defined and clear to all stakeholders.</li> <li>Tools are developed and disseminated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings;</li> <li>Emails;</li> <li>Newsletter;</li> <li>Branding and style guidelines;</li> <li>Social media and advocacy plan templates;</li> <li>Minutes of meetings;</li> <li>Donor mapping matrix tools;</li> <li>Communication and advocacy products (to be defined with countries)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All country requests were responded to in a timely manner.</li> <li>Satisfaction of at least 70% of country cluster coordinators on advocacy and communications support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The requests for support for advocacy and communication activities were responded to in a timely manner (less than 1 week).</li> <li>Action plans were developed per country (on request).</li> <li>All country-level cluster coordinators obtained the necessary tools and templates.</li> </ul>

**Result 3: Evidence-based advocacy on collectively identified topics is conducted – aligned with 2.4 SO**

<i>Specific objectives</i>	<i>Target Audiences</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
<b>The GSC advocates actively on identified priority topics to contribute to strengthened humanitarian shelter programming.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian stakeholders (see previously);</li> <li>Host authorities;</li> <li>Traditional donor representatives.</li> <li>Non-traditional donors.</li> <li>Private sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the research global focal point with the implementation of advocacy plans based on research workplan.</li> <li>Develop advocacy action plans for the WG and CoPs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emails;</li> <li>Meetings;</li> <li>Minutes of meetings</li> <li>Advocacy plans per topic/WG/CoP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One advocacy plan exists per pre-identified research topic.</li> <li>Advocacy plans exist for Working Groups and Community of Practices who requested support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The GSC contributes to influencing positively the sector and the overall humanitarian responses based on research and evidence-based actions.</li> </ul>