

Shelter Cluster

Roles

of the Shelter Coordination Team (SCT)

The SCT is a flexible team, deployed by the IFRC to coordinate the Shelter Cluster in response to natural disasters during the emergency phase.

Its composition varies upon the size and needs of a disaster, ranging from a 2 to 20 person team. The key roles of the SCT include the following:

- Cluster coordinator
- Information manager
- Technical coordinator
- Recovery advisor

Additional roles can be deployed as required.

Background

The shelter coordination team (SCT) serves as a 'secretariat' of the Shelter Cluster, providing coordination services to shelter agencies. There are key positions in the SCT and others which can be incorporated when necessary. The following case study describes the various roles of the SCT and their impact on the Shelter Cluster during a response.



Key roles of the SCT

An IFRC-led shelter coordination team has been deployed 17 times in response to disasters between 2005 and 2010. The type and context of a disaster always vary and as a result, the needs of both shelter agencies and beneficiaries also fluctuate. The SCT adapts accordingly with experts who are seconded to the SCT - provided by Red Cross Red Crescent Societies and cluster partners. As a result, the SCT is more inclusive, and enhances the participation of cluster members in the coordination process. The complementary, flexible roles of the SCT that are deployed based on the size and needs of a disaster response operation include the following:

Cluster coordinator

The cluster coordinator ensures that the shelter response is guided by relevant policy guidelines and technical standards. He/she identifies key partners, and serves as a focal point for national and provincial government authorities, inter-cluster coordinators, the

UN humanitarian coordinator, UN agencies and other NGOs. As head of the SCT, the cluster coordinator is responsible for the daily administrative, financial and operational decisions in the field, including local staff engaged in the response. When necessary the role of the cluster coordinator can expand to include the deputy or hub coordinator.

Information manager

The information manager analyses information, providing a global overview on progress and gaps in implementation through information management services such as tables, maps and matrices. The information manager liaises with information managers from other clusters, OCHA, etc., to ensure information is shared properly, and that all humanitarian actors involved in the response are using common datasets. During a large humanitarian response operation, the role of information manager can expand to include other IM staff, geographic information system technicians, among others.

Technical coordinator

With a background in architecture, engineering, or built environments, the technical coordinator supports the government and Shelter Cluster partners in developing coordinated, technical solutions for response plans and operations. He/she coordinates the Technical Working Groups (TWiGs), and assists in identifying and building relationships with key humanitarian partners for the shelter response, including technical coordinators from various sectors or clusters to ensure there is a complementary and cross-sectorial approach to technical issues. The technical coordinator will support the cluster coordinator in relations with appropriate government representatives, donors, and national academic institutions such as those in the field of engineering or architecture. During a large humanitarian response operation, the technical coordinator's role can expand to include other functions such as a debris advisor or an environmental advisor.

Recovery advisor

A key role in the SCT, the recovery advisor guides the Shelter Cluster in maintaining a focus on recovery issues during the emergency phase of the response. He/she liaises with shelter agencies and external partners - such as the Early Recovery Cluster and host government - to address recovery issues related to shelter, and develop a recovery strategy.

Additional roles of the SCT

Deputy coordinator

The deputy coordinator is an extension of the SCT coordinator. He/she is deployed when the coordinator needs support on a wide range of responsibilities and demands. The deputy coordinator provides direct support to the coordinator by chairing meetings (sub-hubs, TWiG, SAG, etc.), making executive administrative, strategic or operational decisions for the SCT, and representing the coordinator with relevant inter-cluster or external partners.

Hub coordinator

The hub coordinator is deployed to support the coordinator in his/her wide range of responsibilities. He/she is the coordinator of the Shelter Cluster at a regional level. The hub coordinator directly supports agencies,

making administrative or strategic decisions under his/her jurisdiction, but in alignment with national Shelter Cluster policies and guidelines.

Government liaison

The government liaison is a focal point for the national government of the affected country and other relevant actors, such as representatives from governments providing bilateral support, etc. The government liaison is also a focal point for relations with the UN resident/humanitarian coordinator. He/she provides support to the cluster coordinator for diplomatic relations, and ensures the best interests of the Shelter Cluster are represented with government counterparts and other external partners. The government liaison provides feedback to shelter agencies on government policies, standards and structures, contact information and other related issues.

Community liaison

The community liaison's objective is to ensure that the affected population is at the heart of response. He/she will work with the cluster members to ensure that accountability mechanisms towards affected population are implemented, including: appropriate understanding of shelter actors of the affected population's needs and capacities, consultation and participation of affected population in planning and delivering the shelter response, effective communication to the affected population on the plans of the agencies, feedback or complaint mechanisms put in place and followed up, monitoring, and other systems.

Environmental advisor

The environmental advisor encourages shelter agencies to integrate an environmentally sustainable approach to recovery after a disaster. With an expertise in the field of environmental sciences and natural resource management, the environmental advisor evaluates the context of a response, and provides necessary guidance and technical advice to shelter agencies on a range of issues including shelter materials, sustainability, transport and logistics, water and sanitation, and disaster risk reduction. He/she is in direct contact with the Environment Reference Group of the Global Shelter Cluster.

Housing, land and property rights (HLP) advisor

The HLP advisor coordinates between shelter agencies, the government, relevant clusters and external partners, to ensure there is a harmonized approach to managing legal and regulatory issues related to housing, land and property rights. He/she addresses matters such as land rights for landowners and IDPs in camps, evictions, and government land tenure policies, etc., helping agencies achieve a clear and consistent response. Note: When an HLP advisor is not deployed, these tasks falls under the responsibility of the Recovery Advisor.

Debris advisor

The debris advisor manages alternative usages for debris and rubble from the disaster. With a technical background in architecture or engineering, he/she works to find methods for rapid disposal, or alternative, efficient use of debris material to create materials for construction including concrete blocks, crush gravel, or construct Gabion-based houses, etc. The debris advisor may use his/her technical expertise to guide shelter agencies in the re-use and management of debris on their shelter sites, and also work with the environmental advisor to incorporate environmentally sustainable approaches to the shelter response.



The debris advisor works on the construction of a Gabion-based house with a shelter agency in Haiti.

Urban settlement advisor

The urban settlement advisor is deployed to the SCT specifically in the context of an urban disaster. He/she contributes to long-term planning and reconstruction needs, providing guidance on the integration of land use and community-based needs such as schooling, transport, etc., to improve the economic and social environments of communities during a response.

Assessment coordinator

The assessment coordinator is responsible for managing the different evaluations or estimations in a response. These are often carried out by the government or shelter agencies, and assessments can address a range of issues from shelter needs, to the number of individuals affected by the disaster, etc. The assessment coordinator combines the resources to create an overview that can usefully inform the operation, or to facilitate an exchange between shelter agencies. The assessment coordinator will also organise or participate in joint assessments such as ad-hoc joint Shelter Cluster assessments, or Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA), and other type of joint assessments.

Contingency planning focal point

The contingency planning focal point is responsible for ensuring that shelter agencies are informed and well prepared for potential, incoming disasters and different scenarios. He/she ensures that planning and preparations are aligned with those of the host government and other clusters. As a result, the contingency planning focal point maintains an overview on the stocks and placement of shelter materials (i.e., tarpaulins, tents, etc.), which arrive from abroad, or which are present in-country. The contingency planning focal point liaises with shelter agencies, other clusters, government counterparts and OCHA, in order to coordinate appropriately. This role is most appropriate when the risk of another disaster is high.

Logistics coordinator

The logistics coordinator ensures that the logistical aspects related with the overall shelter intervention meet the needs of the shelter

agencies. He/she works very closely with the Logistics Cluster, and acts as a liaison between the two clusters. The logistics coordinator meets with different logistics coordinators from various shelter agencies, and address methods for improving the response such as the establishment of a common pipeline, facilitation of customs, joint procurement, and similar initiatives.

Media and communications advisor

The media and communications advisor provides a number of communications tools and resources for beneficiaries, shelter agencies, journalists, external partners and donors. He/she leads initiatives for beneficiary communications, and also serves as a media spokesperson for the Shelter Cluster, interviewing with local and international journalists and linking them directly with shelter agencies.



The media and communications advisor speaks with beneficiaries about their shelter needs.

Administrative support

The administrative support ensures that the SCT can work efficiently by managing internal issues of the SCT related to administration, finance, logistics, and human resources. This includes the daily management of office supplies, accommodation, coordination of travel to/from meetings, recruitment of national staff, among other tasks. Administrative support ensures that daily operations run smoothly, ultimately helping the SCT to meet the needs of beneficiaries, shelter agencies and government counterparts.

Remote support

Remote support is provided to the SCT at critical periods during the response such as a handover of the Shelter Cluster. Remote support staff ensure the Shelter Cluster remains aligned with past decisions and best practices. Remote support can also be given for activities that do not need to be carried out in-country such as translation, creating and updating websites, analysis of secondary data, etc. Depending on the circumstances, these activities be achieved more efficiently, and they are cost-effective if they are completed outside of the affected country, or in a different time zone.

Other roles

Any other roles needed by the shelter cluster members can be deployed.

Impact

- The SCT's flexibility allows the Shelter Cluster to appropriately adapt and respond to the needs of beneficiaries and shelter agencies during a response. This process allows the Shelter Cluster's coordination services to be more effective and efficient; if extra support is needed, the SCT can expand to include the appropriate technical, operational and strategic expertise.
- Financial and human resources are valuable during a response. By adapting the SCT to the needs of beneficiaries, agencies and the disaster, it ensures resources are used effectively and efficiently.
- In a large disaster response operation, the needs of the affected population can be overwhelming. The flexibility of SCT staff can provide a more comprehensive range of services for shelter agencies as needed, thereby improving their ability provide appropriate shelter to the affected population.



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For more on the Humanitarian Reform, the role of the IFRC as convener of the Shelter Cluster and the SCT, please visit www.sheltercluster.org