

## Shelter Cluster

# Technical Coordinator

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

As convener of the Shelter Cluster for natural disasters, the IFRC aims to support shelter agencies in their shelter response through the provision of coordination services. This process is managed by the shelter coordination team (SCT), which includes a technical coordinator. The following case study outlines the role of the technical coordinator, his/her key activities and, and the impact it has on the shelter response.



## The role of the technical coordinator

The technical coordinator is a key role of the SCT, deployed with each Shelter Cluster response. With a background in architecture, engineering, or built environments, he/she supports the government and Shelter Cluster partners in developing coordinated, technical solutions for response plans and operations.

Within the SCT, the technical coordinator supports the cluster coordinator in guiding shelter agencies in their development and implementation of shelter programming, in order to provide safe and resilient shelter solutions for beneficiaries. He/she coordinates the Technical Working Groups (TWiGs), which are created on a needs-basis to address specific issues related to shelter programming.

The technical coordinator also assists in identifying and building relationships with key humanitarian partners for the shelter response, such as national and provincial

authorities or technical experts. External to the Shelter Cluster, he/she will liaise with other technical coordinators from various sectors or clusters to ensure there is a complimentary and cross-sectorial approach to technical issues, such as water and sanitation and logistics. 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. In the Haiti earthquake operation of 2010 for example, the debris advisor supported the technical coordinator by providing guidance on the re-use of debris.

## Main activities

### Technical guidance

The technical coordinator helps guide the shelter response by promoting appropriate technical standards, relevant policy guidelines, and government regulations such as urban zoning, building codes and environmental standards. Together with the cluster coordinator, he/she establishes a link with the relevant government partners, encouraging agencies to share best practices and agree on common standards for a more equitable response. The goal is to reduce vulnerabilities and promote appropriate, safe and resilient construction. He/she will help identify gaps in performance, support agencies in their planning processes, and aid in the transition from emergency shelter to transitional or long-term shelter recovery.



### Technical Working Groups (TWiGs)

The technical coordinator often facilitates TWiGs while promoting the involvement and leadership of all stakeholders. There can be numerous TWiGs during a response, and while they are facilitated by the technical coordinator, the content and results always derived from

shelter agencies. TWiGs exist on a needs-basis only to address specific issues, and work collectively in a spirit of mutual cooperation and consensual decision-making. They ensure that responsibilities are distributed appropriately, with clearly defined focal points. In previous Shelter Cluster deployments, the technical coordinator has chaired TWiGs that address topics such as contents of common shelter kits and non-food items packages, site selection and physical planning, rubble removal, winter tent guidelines, heating, housing safety, and fire safety promotion.

### **Advocacy, resource mobilization and capacity building**

With a focus on technical and resource requirements, the technical coordinator will support the cluster coordinator in identifying core advocacy concerns and initiatives. He/she will also provide relevant training to shelter agencies, national authorities, civil society or other humanitarian partners involved in the shelter response, in order to strengthen their capacity. In previous Shelter Cluster deployments for example, the technical coordinator provided training on the Sphere Standards, as well as other issues.



### **Assessment and monitoring**

The technical coordinator maintains an overview on market prices, quantity and quality of shelter and non-food item materials in-country. He/she assists the Shelter Cluster in maintaining consistent benchmarks and data to track progress and performance.

## **Impact**

- The technical coordinator plays a strong role in partnership and capacity building. He/she coordinates the shelter expertise of various partners including the national and provincial government, shelter agencies, and other clusters such as the Water and Sanitation (WASH) or Logistics Cluster, among others. The technical coordinator maintains a global overview between all parties, encouraging a consistent and coordinated response.

- The technical coordinator's proficiency (i.e., engineering or architecture) – combined with the expertise of other technical advisors – assists shelter agencies in providing safe and resilient shelter for beneficiaries. The guidance he/she provides through TWiGs and other coordination mechanisms improves the accountability and effectiveness of the shelter response.
- Within the SCT, the technical coordinator has a level of flexibility that can adapt easily to the needs of a shelter response and agencies; he/she can take on additional responsibility to support the cluster coordinator or information manager, or expand to a unit, including other functions such as the debris advisor.



**For further information,  
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