

Shelter
Cluster

Cluster Coordinator

of the Shelter Coordination Team (SCT)

Background

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.

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 is led by a coordinator. The following case study outlines the role of the cluster coordinator, as well as the key activities and services he/she provides, and the impact it has on the shelter response.



Shelter Cluster coordinator, Gerhard Tauscher, addresses shelter agencies during a coordination meeting in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010.

The role of the cluster coordinator

At a strategic level, the cluster coordinator provides coordination services to shelter agencies as well as to the Global Shelter Cluster coordinator in Geneva. He/she ensures that the shelter response is guided by relevant policy guidelines and technical standards, and oversees the Shelter Cluster transition from the emergency to recovery phase, or handover to another agency for lead role of the Shelter Cluster.

As head of the SCT, the cluster coordinator is responsible for the daily administrative, financial and operational decisions in the field, including local staff supporting coordination activities. He/she has a technical reporting line to the IFRC Global Shelter Cluster in Geneva, and for security, administration, country or Red Cross Red Crescent National Society related issues, the cluster coordinator reports to the most senior IFRC representative in-country.

The cluster coordinator is responsible for the identification of key partners, and serves as a focal point for national and provincial government authorities, inter-cluster coordination, humanitarian NGOs, UN agencies and the UN resident/humanitarian coordinator, among others. The cluster coordinator advocates for the best interests of the Shelter Cluster and shelter beneficiaries. He/she takes the lead role in the compilation of appeal documentation, serves as a direct liaison with the donor community and supports fundraising initiatives on behalf of the Shelter Cluster.

Depending on the size and needs of a disaster response, the cluster coordinator's role may be extended to include the supervision of deputy coordinator(s) and hub coordinator(s). These complementary roles exist to support the cluster coordinator in his/her wide range of responsibilities:

The *deputy coordinator* is a duplicate role of the cluster coordinator; he/she attends meetings in place of the cluster coordinator, and has the authority to make administrative, strategic or operational decisions that are consistent with the coordinator's.

The *hub coordinator* works at a more micro level than the deputy coordinator, managing a specific geographical area of the shelter response with agencies. He/she makes administrative or strategic decisions under his/her jurisdiction, and in alignment with Shelter Cluster policies and guidelines, whilst also providing feedback on the effectiveness of the response at a micro level.

Main Activities

Coordination

Coordination towards the goal of providing shelter assistance to beneficiaries affected by a disaster is the role of the Shelter Cluster. The cluster coordinator not only leads this process among the SCT, but he/she also serves as a critical linkage in coordinating; whether it is helping shelter agencies find a place to implement their programmes, connecting them with local authorities or relevant suppliers, or helping agencies resource the SCT and other shelter agencies. The cluster coordinator links partners together, in order to provide solutions to challenges during a response, and avoid gaps and overlaps in implementation. The cluster coordinator also guides internal and external partners in the shelter response process, while consistently maintaining the interest of beneficiaries. At the same time, he/she works to build the capacity of the government and shelter agencies. He/she will not interfere unnecessarily with shelter programming, but rather aims to coordinate the processes to achieve equality, efficiency and effectiveness in a response.



Shelter Cluster coordinator, Gregg McDonald, meets with former President of Haiti, René Préval, after the earthquake in 2010.

Advocacy

Advocacy for both shelter agencies and beneficiaries is one of the key roles of the coordinator. He/she will respond to inquiries from government officials, represent shelter agencies with external partners, and provide one voice to communicate the multiple concerns and challenges of the shelter response. The cluster coordinator will advocate, or sometimes defend, the policies, mandates and capacities of shelter agencies based on the information at hand. He/she also advocates with donors to ensure requirements are aligned with the humanitarian response and needs of beneficiaries.

The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

The SAG is comprised of a select group of representatives from shelter agencies and the government, who meet on a regular basis to advise on the strategic direction of the Shelter Cluster's response and priorities during an operation. The cluster coordinator chairs the SAG, and leads the strategic process for the Shelter Cluster during a response.

National Shelter Cluster and hub meetings

The national Shelter Cluster and hub (regional) meetings are an integral part of the activities for the SCT. The cluster coordinator supports government representative(s) to chair or co-chair numerous meetings between shelter agencies. The meetings reinforce the value of networking and information sharing between all Shelter Cluster partners, and they also contribute to strong relationships with the host government.

Reporting and monitoring performance

Reporting and monitoring performance are responsibilities of the cluster coordinator, as it ensures the shelter response is effective and aligned with global and national objectives as well as technical standards. This activity includes financial and human resource management of the SCT, which is another key responsibility of the cluster coordinator.

Impact

- The role of the cluster coordinator is crucial in building strong partnerships with high-level government representatives, and other senior-level staff such as the UN resident/humanitarian coordinator. The cluster coordinator also ensures at a political and a strategic level, that the best interests of beneficiaries and shelter agencies are represented.
- The cluster coordinator serves a critical role in advocating as well as partnering for both beneficiaries and shelter agencies. He/she ensures there is a consistent approach at an operational, strategic and political level, in order to address gaps and avoid overlaps in response, while also leading the SCT and building the capacities of the government and shelter agencies.
- By serving as a team leader for the SCT, the coordinator provides a critical element of cohesion and leadership among staff, which facilitates the effective and consistent provision of services and products to shelter agencies.



Shelter Cluster coordinator, Gerhard Tauscher, discusses the shelter response with former U.S. President and U.N. Special Envoy to Haiti, Bill Clinton.



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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