



Global Shelter Cluster



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (Shelter Cluster lead in natural disasters) and UNHCR (lead in conflict situations) co-chair the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) coordination efforts “to support people affected by natural disasters and internally displaced people affected by conflict with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter”.²³

GENDER EQUALITY IN SHELTER

In an emergency where populations are displaced or have had their houses destroyed, shelter is especially important for safety and protection (in a physical sense), and for stabilizing and sustaining family and community life. Dignity and privacy concerns linked to other sectors like non-food items and WASH are closely related to well-being. Getting the right fit for temporary and long-term shelters can make a huge difference in the lives of women, girls, boys, and men. Protection concerns are of high importance in this sector; SGBV is widespread and is often perpetrated in the home by someone known to the victim/survivor i.e., a family member, neighbour etc. Pre-existing gender divisions of labour and unpaid reproductive work are directly linked to inequalities in household management, gender power dynamics, and societal norms around gender equality.

PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SHELTER CLUSTER

- Facilitate women’s and girls’ participation. For example, providing community-based child care so female caregivers can be involved in repairing/constructing houses (various trades such as masonry and carpentry), as well as meetings to discuss shelter-related matters. It is important to budget daycare and cash for women’s unpaid work to support shelter programming, and to encourage local solutions;
- Where women do not have the skills to build their own houses, support them to learn the skills. In crises and beyond, women are often forced to trade sex for having a man build their home;
- Consult local women’s associations and host participatory design workshops to integrate cultural norms, preferences and concerns in shelter design;

- Ensure women in polygamous households register separately with their children, and have adapted and appropriate shelter;
- Construct gender-sensitive facilities (for example bathrooms and toilets) that have proper lighting, locks, and equipment (e.g. waste bin and drying racks for menstrual hygiene products); and
- Household surveys must seek to include diverse perspectives and cannot rely on family representatives who may have differing priorities. Women, girls, boys, men, elders, and people with disabilities must all be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

- There should be continual community engagement and reassessments of shelter needs in each community (especially with women and girls) of both host and displaced populations. This allows for a representative redefinition of shelter needs and is the most appropriate way to address protection risks and other priorities;
- Humanitarian organizations should budget time and financial resources to conduct a gender and power analysis prior to launching shelter programming;
- The GSC needs to use local capacity and resources, as well as support local actors to be the lead in any initiative, and challenge harmful gender norms especially in remunerated work;
- It is crucial to understand the legal system and local authorities. This can be done by engaging local lawyers to learn local land tenure rights (especially related to women and indigenous peoples) and customs; and
- Gender sensitive protection concerns by diverse community members need to be heard and taken into consideration for programming. For example, any issues with proximity to a border, distance to services, latrines, lighting, and the needs of the elderly, those with disabilities, etc. should be recognized and addressed.