# Global Shelter Cluster: Research Priorities Baseline 2022
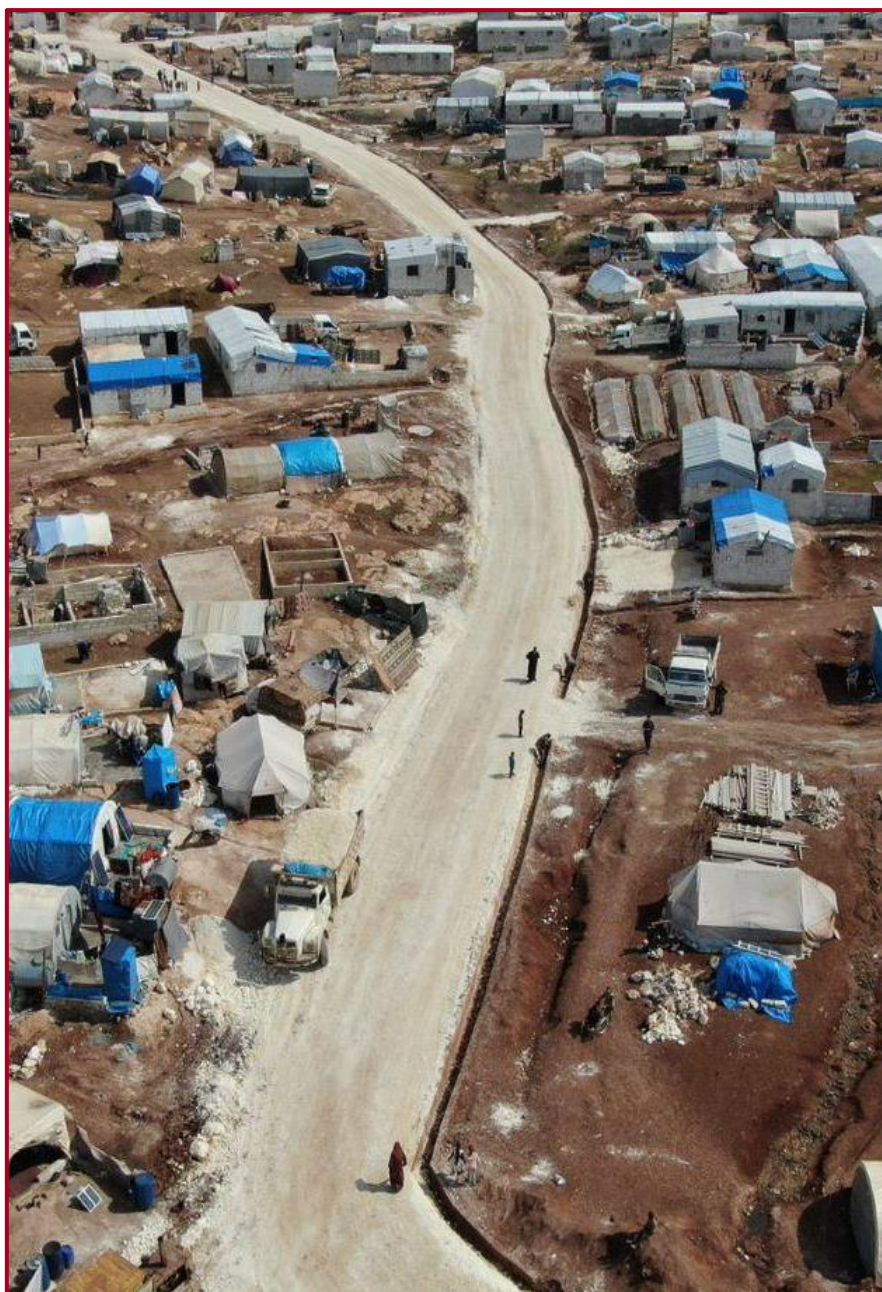
*Evidence makes humanitarian action*

*more effective, more ethical, and more accountable.*

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# 1.0 Executive Summary

Humanitarian practitioners, and to some extent affected households, lack the evidence base to have confidence in making effective decisions because shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises remain an under-researched aspect of humanitarian response (Peacock, Dash, and Zhang, 2007; Twigg, 2002; Maynard, Parker and Twigg 2017). Where these decisions should be informed by up-to-date data and a range of research findings, there is no critical mass of relevant research, access to data and research findings is often restricted and research is under-valued in humanitarian response processes. This lack of evidence can be detrimental to the quality of humanitarian response since a "Lack of evidence makes humanitarian action less **effective**, less **ethical** and less **accountable**"[1].

This study seeks to provide an indicative baseline for the research work of the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) to ensure that this work is itself evidence-based. This report describes the research priorities of humanitarian practitioners engaged in the coordination of humanitarian response, based on analysis of data collected from 20 Cluster Coordinators and 24 academic partner organisations in 42 countries. It also incorporates an earlier GSC study based on a consultation with 11 member organisations of the Global Shelter Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) which can be found here.

This baseline report answers three key questions:

- How is Research understood and used by Shelter Clusters?
- What are the Research Priorities of Shelter Clusters?
- What are the Research Capabilities available to Shelter Clusters?

## Key Baseline Findings

**Cluster Coordinators expressed the need for an enabling environment which upholds the value of research, evidence-based programming, and advocacy**. Alongside an enthusiasm for research, the consultation revealed that Shelter Clusters experience barriers to accessing relevant research in support of those who have lost their shelter and settlements. Two recommendations emerged, including increasing perceptions of the value of research and tackling gaps in resources and data.

**Cluster members and Coordinators share a widespread appreciation of the link between research, quality, and accountability.** Causal research questions[2] and comparative research questions were mentioned as the most useful types of research for strategic planning and advocacy, alongside descriptive research questions which are useful in the early stages of a response. There is also support

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[1] ALNAP Evidence | ALNAP visited on 08.04.22
[2] Causal questions ask why something is happening, comparative questions draw comparisons between things, and descriptive questions describe what is happening without asking why. Further explanation can be found on p8

for research activities to be more integrated with response activities, and for data to be shared more widely for analysis. The preferred format for research findings is graphical and concise, and this preference is underpinned by the understanding that the research process to generate findings must still be rigorous.

**Thematically, the following areas were mentioned by the most participants as priority areas where more research is needed:**

- **The Longer Term, including Recovery.**
- **Cash and Markets.**
- **The Wider Impact of Shelter and Settlements**.

The longer term is a clear priority for those based in the field, while cash and markets and the wider impact of shelter and settlements were priorities shared by both SAG members and field-based Cluster Coordinators.

**There exists a critical mass of potential research partners to support access to and generation of research relevant to those who have lost their shelter and settlements,** Research partners are currently predominantly driven by the discipline of architecture, and populated by individual researchers based across Europe and Australia. While individual researchers based within the discipline of architecture are in the majority, they often work together between research institutes and disciplines, which increases opportunities for a multidisciplinary and international focus. Five multidisciplinary research centres were also identified, hosted by both universities and think tanks.

**Lastly, there is a significant amount of enthusiasm and activity around research in the GSC Working Groups** which could be harnessed to support and resource future programming and advocacy. It is, therefore, now possible to harness enthusiasm and resources globally and in the field to build evidence which supports quality humanitarian assistance for those who have lost their shelter and settlements.

**Recommendations**

- Focus research work on improving the evidence base in the priority thematic areas of Longer-Term Recovery, Cash and Markets and the Wider Impacts of Shelter and Settlements, and better access to data.

- Ensure that the value of research and evidence and the harmonisation of response and research processes are supported by the new GSC strategy.

- Review research priorities and research partners on a regular basis to ensure the continuing relevance of GSC research work.

## 2.0 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The GSC created a focus on research for two reasons. First, to better inform best practice in decision making in support of those who have lost their shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises. Second, to provide strong evidence to support critical advocacy messages which can draw attention to the importance of shelter outcomes and the significant impact they have on people affected by humanitarian crises. A baseline is required to ensure this work begins from a starting point which is relevant to the current experience of humanitarian practitioners, and accountable to crisis-affected households.

To achieve the objective of evidence-based programming and advocacy, the GSC began to establish the research priorities of the SAG and raised evidence-based planning up the agenda of Working Groups and Communities of Practice. The GSC has further strengthened strategic planning for research by creating the position of GSC Focal Point for Research.

In 2020, the GSC commissioned a study to establish the key research questions that the Global Shelter Cluster needs to respond to. This first phase of consultation invited the SAG to identify, prioritize, and develop with academic rigour the key research questions. For each of the research themes, information was gathered about background, importance, and impact, to guide researchers about the focus and usefulness of the research. The results are summarised as part of the baseline below, and the full report can be found here.

In 2021, the GSC secured funding from USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs and Habitat for Humanity International to establish a Global Focal Point for Research. The GFP works closely with

other GFPs and Coordinators, especially the GFP for Advocacy and the GFP for Information Management. The GFP for Research is responsible for strategic planning and coordination of research activities and providing research support.

The GFP Research contributed to two workshop sessions to explore research and evidence with cluster members and Coordinators. On 15th June 2021, a session was held at the GSC Cluster Meeting to discuss the Multi-Sectoral Impact of Shelter, including evidence. On 3rd November 2021, the GFP Research and the GFP Advocacy introduced Research and Advocacy in a session at the GSC Cluster Coordinators Workshop, with a particular focus on different types of evidence for programming and advocacy.

This baseline report has been informed by the above activity and is intended to act as a basis for the GSC work on research going forward.

## 2.2 Purpose

The purpose of the baseline report is to answer three key questions:

- How is Research understood and used by Shelter Clusters?
- What are the Research Priorities of Shelter Clusters?
- What are the Research Capabilities available to Shelter Clusters?

Access to existing research and the generation of new research is key to keeping the evidence base for humanitarian assistance alive and relevant, but shelter and settlement interventions remain an under-researched aspect of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian practitioners, and to some extent affected households, lack the evidence base to have confidence in making effective decisions. The GSC is, therefore, focusing on improving access to existing research and the generation of new research in key areas of shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises. The resulting evidence base will enable and strengthen evidence-based programming and advocacy.

Research is one component of evidence-based, inclusive, and localised programming, with a view to empowering people affected by crises. "Lack of evidence makes humanitarian action less effective, less ethical, and less accountable"[3] In other words, **evidence makes humanitarian action more effective, more ethical, and more accountable.** Using research is one way to contribute to the GSC knowledge-learning-change cycle for making effective decisions. Using research strengthens the knowledge-learning-change cycle to ensure that it informs response planning, advocacy, and learning at country and global levels. Access to research capabilities enables humanitarian assistance to be properly informed by evidence, best practice, and sustained learning.

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[3] Evidence | ALNAP visited 08.04.22

## 2.3 Methodology

The baseline was compiled using several research methods. These included online interviews, surveys, and online workshops. Careful sampling ensured a reasonable and proportional balance between conflict and disasters, and across regions. The survey questions can be found in Annex A. Interviews were based on these same questions, with some additional data gathered concerning the local context of each participant. Participants included members of 11 SAG agencies, Cluster Coordinators, and research partners across 42 countries.

To create the baseline, four mapping exercises were conducted. These included a consultation on SAG member research priorities, a consultation on Cluster Coordinator research use and research priorities, a survey of research partners with capabilities in shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises, and a round-up of current research activities in the GSC Working Groups and Communities of Practice.

This report provides a snapshot, informed by those participants who responded at the time. While participation in the consultations was broad, the findings represent neither a comprehensive record of all priorities nor all capacities but provide a starting point on which to build relevant and accountable research activities.

Consultations were implemented on the assumption that there was enough support to enable interested and available participants to contribute, that the GSC had the capacity to manage and analyse the data and that no external events would prevent participants from taking part. The consultations were not intended to be exhaustive, but a snapshot of current concerns to be updated periodically.

The studies which inform this report were implemented by Lizzie Babister, the GSC Focal Point for Research, and Charles Parrack, GSC Research Associate, and Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University.

## 2.4 Key Definitions

### Evidence

The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of 'evidence' is "the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid", a definition also used in other studies of evidence use in the humanitarian sector. This information can be collected in various ways, from routine monitoring to academic studies (Carden, F., Hanley, T., Paterson, A. 2021)

Existing evidence can also be used to inform humanitarian assistance. This includes secondary data which is data that has been organised but not analysed and previous research findings which have not been shared. This evidence can be re-analysed through literature reviews, systematic reviews (meta-analysis), or simply repackaged into a more accessible format.

## Research

Research is the overall activity of collecting and analysing data, then summarising and sharing findings. Key activities which contribute to the research process include:

- Data collection.
- Data analysis.
- Summarising findings.
- Disseminating findings.

Research activities to generate new evidence are closely aligned and sometimes overlap with some of the activities involved with humanitarian assistance, as shown in Figure 1 below. While the timeframes and techniques are often different, there are opportunities for these two processes to inform one another.
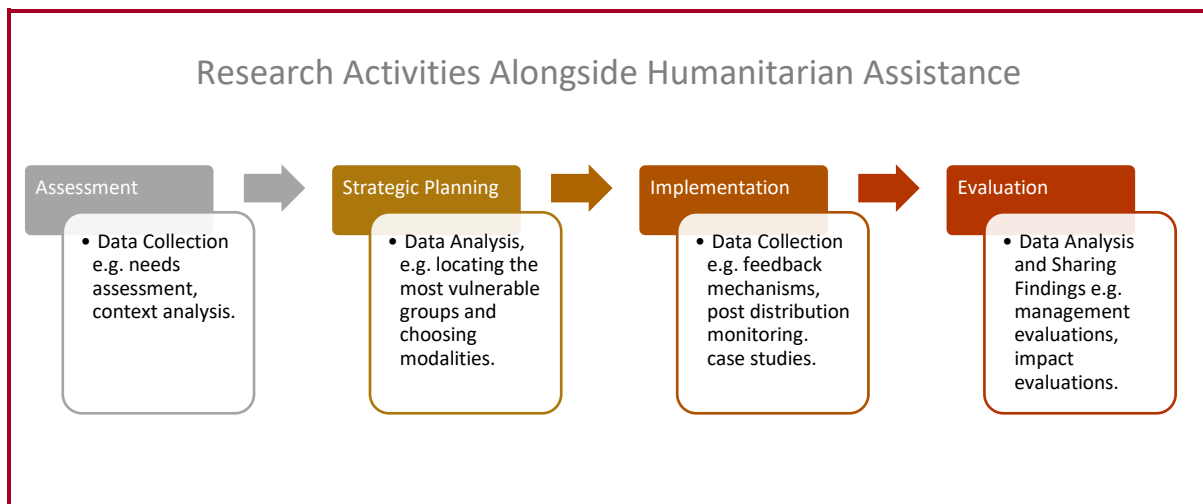
### Research Activities Alongside Humanitarian Assistance

| Assessment | Strategic Planning | Implementation | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Data Collection e.g. needs assessment, context analysis. | • Data Analysis, e.g. locating the most vulnerable groups and choosing modalities. | • Data Collection e.g. feedback mechanisms, post distribution monitoring. case studies. | • Data Analysis and Sharing Findings e.g. management evaluations, impact evaluations. |

Figure 1: The alignment of research activities and response activities.

## Types of Research Questions

Different types of research questions are useful to inform different types of decision-making. Humanitarian practitioners commonly refer to descriptive, comparative, and causal research questions. For instance, Descriptive questions use data to ask 'what' something is like, (e.g. How many households are affected?) Descriptive questions can be used to determine the scale and characteristics of a crisis so it is often used in assessments. Comparative questions use data to ask 'how things compare' with one another (e.g. Are male-headed households recovering more successfully than female-headed households?). Comparative data can be used to explore vulnerabilities between groups to inform decisions about targeting. Causal questions use data to ask 'how' and 'why' things happen by tracing cause and effect (e.g. Why are male households recovering more successfully than female-headed households?). Causal questions can provide powerful evidence

to support the reasoning behind strategy and programming decisions. For this reason, causal research questions are useful for influencing and advocacy.

## 3.0 Baseline Findings

## 3.1 Summary

The findings of the baseline are structured around the key questions and summarised below. First, humanitarian practitioners were asked how research is used and understood, including the barriers to accessing research, second, what are their research priorities including thematic areas and types of research and formats, and lastly to identify the research capabilities available to generate new research and share existing research.

## 3.2 Using Research in Humanitarian Crises

The study found widespread appreciation of the link between research, quality, and accountability. Causal research questions and comparative research questions were mentioned as the most useful types of questions for strategic planning and advocacy, alongside descriptive questions which are useful in the early stages of a response. There was also support for research activities to be more integrated with response activities, and for data to be shared more widely for analysis. While the preferred format for research findings is graphical and concise, this preference was underpinned by the understanding that the research process to generate findings must be still rigorous.

### 3.2.1 How Research is used in the Field

Cluster Coordinators use research for a range of reasons. These can include decision-making, budgeting, influencing, producing guidance, and training. Coordinators mentioned decision-making at the strategic, program, and project levels, and also decisions at various points in the journey of affected households such as preparedness, response, recovery, and risk reduction. Coordinators mentioned using research to inform advocacy with various stakeholders such as governments, donors, and Cluster partners.

Research is used at various points in the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and different types of data and research findings are needed for different activities. In general, Cluster Coordinators recognised that a mixture of different types of data and research are needed to build an evidence base for supporting those who have lost their shelter and settlements. Coordinators appreciated that both quantitative and qualitative data are important to inform decision-making processes.

In addition, where research is valued, it is seen as a contribution to the quality of humanitarian assistance. One coordinator stated that "There needs to be evidence to support quality", and another

explained that this is possible if research is included in certain processes, for instance, "Research is essential in bringing credibility of budgets and strategies". Examples of where using research provides opportunities for achieving this added value of quality include "avoiding repeating mistakes", "thinking beyond the short term" and "adapting to local context", especially the possibilities and limitations the context will allow.

## Useful Types of Research

Two types of research which were specifically mentioned as priorities were comparative research and causal research. Coordinators particularly appreciate comparative research where case studies are included and where more than one context is compared. This type of research allows for a comparison of differences and similarities on many levels and can illustrate why certain approaches to humanitarian assistance may be suitable or unsuitable in a certain context. For example, comparative research may help to answer the questions raised about when to use cash programming, for example.

Casual research questions (which can overlap with comparative research questions) are also key to building rigour into an evidence base. Causal research questions can be used to underpin the reasons for the best course of action because they are based on tracing the causes behind why things happen. Coordinators called for more evidence which captures impact, and this requires causal research questions. For example, questions about the wider impacts of shelter and settlements require causal questions to trace the link between shelter and settlements and outcomes such as health, livelihoods, and safety.

Descriptive research questions were also mentioned by some Coordinators to generate useful evidence to inform assessments. Evidence which provides a picture of the context, including qualitative and quantitative data was valued in the early stages of response.

## Producing Research during Humanitarian Crises

Questions of when and how research is used also generated data about how research can be produced. Several Coordinators pointed out that the process of humanitarian assistance requires data in a similar way to research activities, and that this may create opportunities for generating evidence. These points were raised with an appreciation that the timeframes for humanitarian assistance and research activities do not always align, but that there may be ways to accommodate this. For instance, making sure data is collected systematically and stored for later analysis, or alternatively "fast, reactive real-time research which can be used to directly address changing priorities in the field". Coordinators also identified a gap where these activities are not necessarily linked with a knowledge management process which would ensure the data and research findings make it into the evidence base.

## Sharing Research Findings in Useful Formats

Graphical representation is a popular format across the board for Coordinators, including infographics, drawings with explanations, dashboards, and visual statistics. Short documents were also frequently mentioned, alongside characteristics such as concise, punchy, and quotable. Examples included factsheets, checklists, decision matrices, and flow charts. Some coordinators specified preferred formats best for sharing information, including PDFs, Excel, PowerPoint, URLs, and film. There was

also support for longer documents detailing case studies academic studies, in-depth thematic pieces, and research papers.

It is important to note that the question about preferred formats for research findings revealed confusion concerning the difference between research and data. Some Coordinators described their preferred format for data, and some described how they preferred research findings to be presented. This highlights the need for a shared understanding of research terms. In addition, while the preferred format for research findings is graphical and concise, this preference was underpinned by the understanding that the research process must still be rigorous.

### 3.2.2 Overcoming Barriers to Accessing Relevant Research

Two recommendations emerged from the study of barriers to accessing relevant research in support of those who have lost their shelter and settlements.

**Increase perceptions of the value of research to allow for:**
- Alignment between research and response processes so they inform each other.
- Improved resources for research.
- Improved confidence to implement research.
- More relevant research to be produced.

**Support the research process to tackle gaps in:**
- Relevant local partners.
- Good quality data.
- Access to data.

The perceived barriers to accessing research fell largely into two categories. These categories can be described as systematic barriers and practical barriers. Systematic barriers include those related to the culture, values, and expectations regarding research within the humanitarian system. Practical barriers include those related to the steps involved in finding evidence or implementing research.

Systematic barriers to accessing relevant research circles around a lack of a shared value for research. Coordinators lack of confidence to produce research because there is doubt that stakeholders in humanitarian assistance share its value. There are concerns that its credibility may be questioned by authorities, or it may be ignored and fail to have an impact on policy.

This lack of a shared value for research prevents the space, time, and resources for research activities. One Coordinator explained that "Talk[ing] about research at the organisational level is problematic as they would say it is a waste of time because it is not part of operational plans or programs". There exists a perception that research cannot be prioritised because there are too many other priorities competing for time. As a result, where research is attempted, it can sometimes involve a rushed process resulting in poor quality research which lacks credibility, creating a vicious cycle of devaluing research. The lack of value for research can also create a lack of space to develop the confidence to understand which research is needed, and to understand the available data.

The lack of value placed on research is also demonstrated by the lack of alignment between the research process and the response process. The traditional response process leaves little space, time,

or resources to make the most of opportunities to listen to affected households or for systematic collection of data. Despite both these processes involving similar activities, such as data collection, data analysis, and sharing of findings, the timeframes, capacities, and resources for these activities are not yet aligned to inform each other.

Where entry points for accessing research are found, practical barriers can involve gaps in existing knowledge and evidence or hostile environmental factors. Sometimes the evidence required simply does not exist and this is often because the research available is focussed on different understandings of humanitarian assistance to those specific to current contexts. For example, overarching institutional boundaries between concepts such as humanitarian and development, conflict, and disasters, segregate existing evidence such that it does not answer more nuanced research questions. Similarly, more traditional modes of humanitarian assistance may attract more research, whereas alternative modes which respond to local context lack an evidence base. There are also gaps in research focussed on certain regions which prevent precise decision-making. There is also a lack of research findings recorded in different languages which prevents broad sharing of findings and consistent learning across geographical and cultural groups.

Where environmental barriers exist, these can affect the process of implementing research. In certain contexts, relevant partners are difficult to find, for instance, government counterparts or local universities. In addition, there can be difficulties collecting data, for example, due to security, weather, and lack of permission from authorities. Where data exists, there can be restrictions on access to it, it may lack credibility because it is out of date or partial.

## 3.3 Thematic Priorities for Research

Two consultations informed the thematic priorities for research. Member agencies of the GSC were asked to define the most urgent questions for evidence-gathering research and Cluster Coordinators were asked what kind of research they found the most useful. The thematic areas mentioned by the most participants were:

- **The Longer Term, including Recovery**.
- **Cash and Markets**.
- **The Wider Impact of Shelter and Settlements**.

### 3.3.1 Top Priorities for SAG members
Research priorities by thematic area raised by SAG members were the following two:

- Collect evidence for the wider impact of shelter and settlements programs,
especially health, livelihoods, environment, and protection. Each of these issues affect significant numbers of families and are all housing-related. The impact has the potential to be substantial.

- Understand how cash and markets programming influences shelter and
settlement outcomes. Gaining such evidence on the merits or shortcomings of the use of cash and market interventions can guide informed decisions, leading to more effective programming alongside a reliable increase in shelter technical quality.

Other priority research areas were identified as: conflict; space standards; self-recovery; housing, land, and property issues (HLP); long-term impact and recovery. The chart below shows the priorities mentioned the most often.

### SAG Research Priorities



- Wider Impacts
- Cash and Markets
- Conflict
- Space Standards
- Self-Recovery
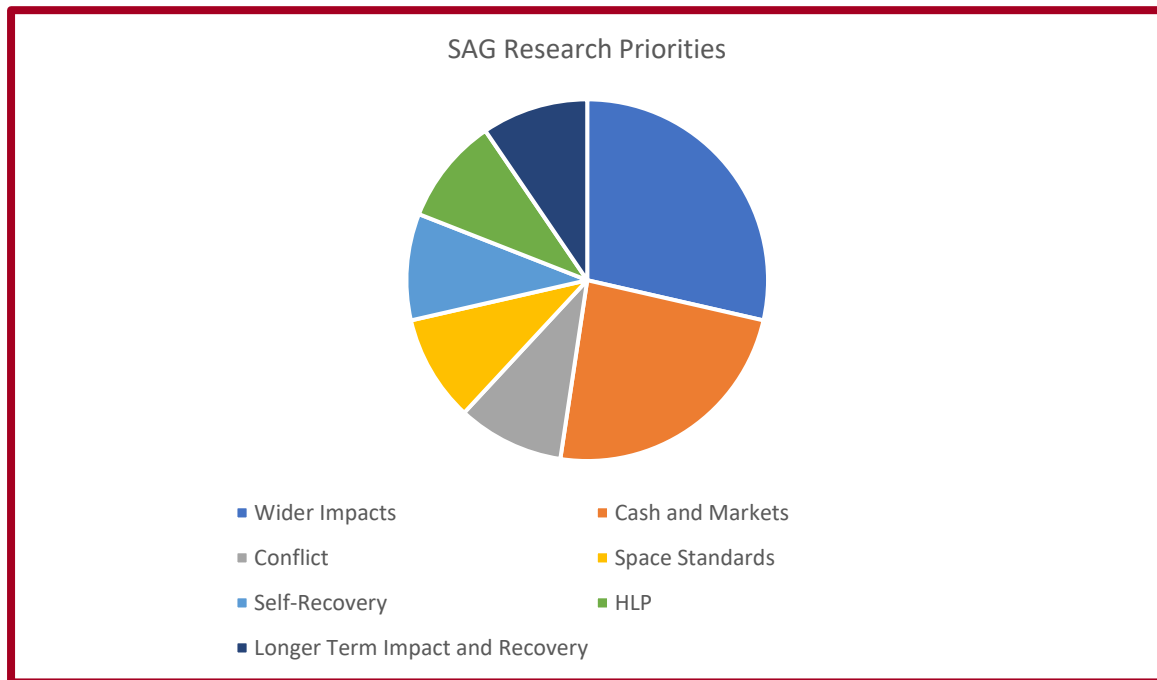- HLP
- Longer Term Impact and Recovery

Figure 2: SAG Research Priorities.

The full breakdown of themes identified by the SAG can be found in Annex B and the full report, Parrack C, (2020), can be found here.

### 3.3.2 Top Priorities for Cluster Coordinators

Research priorities by thematic area raised by the most Cluster Coordinators were the following three, two of which overlap with those of the SAG above:

- The Longer Term, including Recovery.
- Cash and Markets.
- The Wider Impact of Shelter and Settlements.

Other thematic areas were mentioned by six or fewer countries. These generally covered different programming options, localisation, and technical aspects of programming.

Across disaster and conflict contexts and across geographical regions there was a mix of priority thematic areas, which included the top three themes. The chart below shows the priorities mentioned the most often and the full breakdown of themes identified by Cluster Coordinators can be found in Annex C.
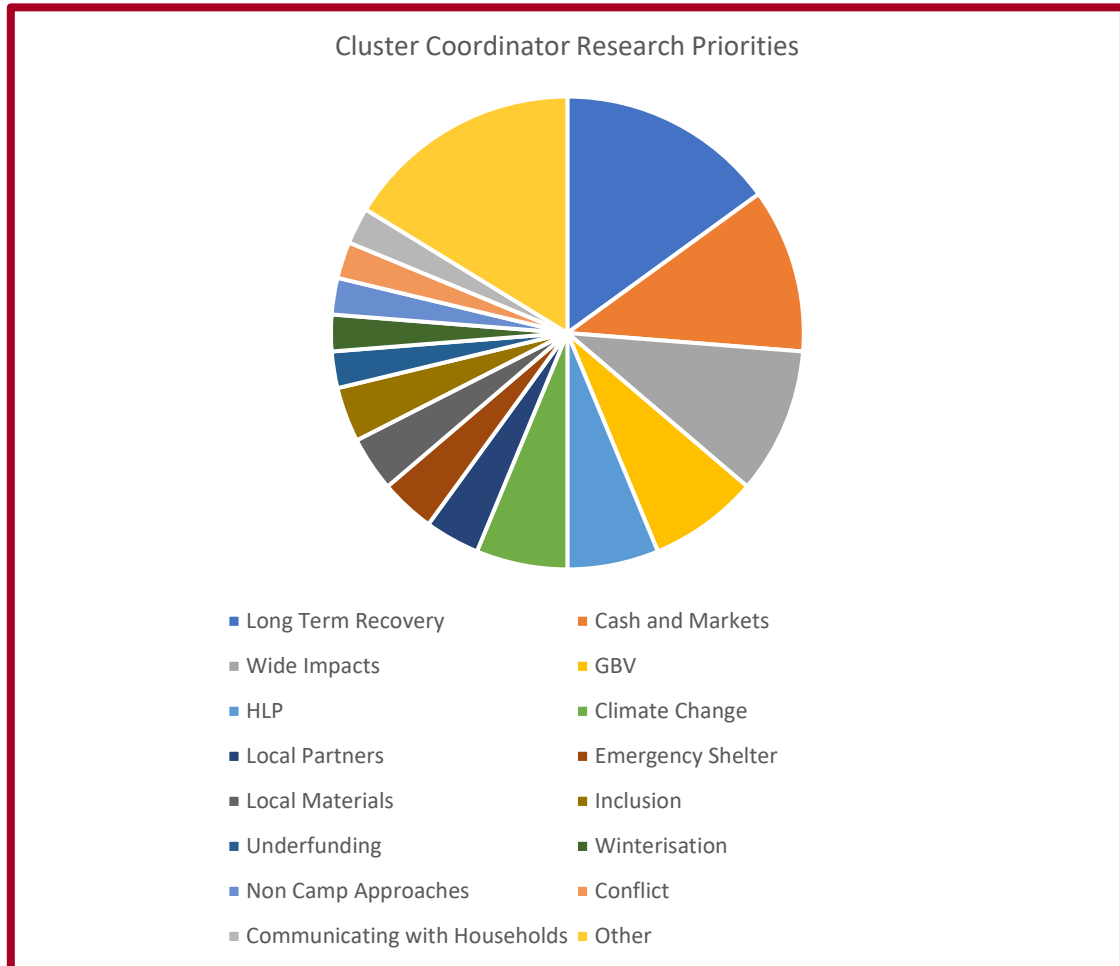


**Cluster Coordinator Research Priorities**

- Long Term Recovery
- Cash and Markets
- Wide Impacts
- GBV
- HLP
- Climate Change
- Local Partners
- Emergency Shelter
- Local Materials
- Inclusion
- Underfunding
- Winterisation
- Non Camp Approaches
- Conflict
- Communicating with Households
- Other

Figure 3: Cluster Coordinator Priorities.

**The Longer Term, including Recovery.**

How to support those households who have lost their shelter and settlements in the longer term was a recurring theme in the concerns of Coordinators, with 12 raising this area as a top priority. Research questions posed by countries which were concerned with the longer term focussed mainly on how to support households with sustainable solutions, resilient shelter, DRR, and reconstruction. Coordinators are also interested in what self-recovery looks like, what are the barriers to recovery, and the longer-term impacts of sheltering. Research questions which address these concerns are both casual and exploratory, and can be summarised as the following:

1. Which evidence exists to demonstrate how best to support households who have lost their shelter and settlements in the longer term?

2. What are the barriers to supporting households who have lost their shelter and settlements in the longer term?

3. How are households themselves able to recover in the longer term?

## Cash and Markets in support of Shelter and Settlements

How to decide when to use cash-based programming was a concern for Coordinators in 9 countries. Most of these Coordinators wanted evidence to support programming choices about when to choose a cash approach and to support markets, especially in comparison with other modalities. Others were interested in the impact of cash programming. Research questions which address these concerns are comparative and casual, and can be summarised as the following:

1. Which evidence demonstrates criteria which indicate that cash programming will work well for those who have lost their shelter and settlements, in comparison with other modalities?

2. What is the impact of cash programming for households who have lost their shelter and settlements, in comparison with other modalities?

## The Wider Impacts of Shelter and Settlements

How to identify the wider impacts of shelter and settlements was a frequent concern and overall, Coordinators in 8 countries raised this as a priority. Where specified, Coordinators listed the impacts on GBV, mental and physical health, livelihoods, conflict, sustainability, and resilience. Within these themes, the role of GBV in shelter and settlements was predominantly raised by Coordinators in 6 countries. Grouped together this brings the total number of countries identifying the wider impacts of shelter and settlements to 14.

Research questions to answer these concerns are causal and would include:

1. Which evidence demonstrates the role of shelter and settlements in GBV/health/livelihoods/safety of households who have lost their shelter and settlements?

2. How do the wider impacts of supporting households who have lost their shelter and settlements indicate how support is best provided?

**Widespread Priorities**

Other thematic areas which received less attention, but still attracted more than one country are listed as follows:

| Themes | Number of countries |
|---|---|
| GBV | 6 |
| HLP | 5 |
| Climate Change | 5 |
| Local Partners | 3 |
| Emergency Shelter | 3 |
| Local Materials | 3 |
| Inclusion | 3 |

These themes could, therefore, leverage a critical mass of data to inform research where Coordinators are interested to work together. Comparative research involving several different contexts was a high priority for most Coordinators.

Similarly, the following themes were raised by two countries each: Underfunding, Winterisation, Non-camp Approaches, Conflict, and Communicating with Households.

**Priorities Specific to Single Countries**

The following themes were raised by single countries: Returns, Rental, Host Families, Flexibility to Security, Value Chain Analysis, Space Standards, Participation, Project Management, Housing Typologies, Opportunities for Development, Terminology, Gender in Shelter Teams, and Asbestos.

## 3.4 Available Research Capabilities

The Research work of the GSC is supported by a range of sources of expertise. These include Cluster Members, some of whom lead research activities within Working Groups, and research partners such as universities and think tanks. Existing relationships exist on an ad hoc basis, but they have the potential to become consolidated into a vibrant network.

### 3.4.1 Current GSC Research Activity

Mapping of research activities in the GSC Working Groups and Communities of Practice revealed a range of activities focused on evidence-based programming through research activities. These include:

The Recovery Working Group published several papers in the InterAction Roadmap for Research. The GFP Research is supporting the search for new funding for this work.

Cash and Markets Working Group plan to analyse data on the inclusion of shelter in MPCA to inform discussions on the MPCA outcome indicators.

The Shelter Projects Working Group has drafted a concept note to implement longitudinal studies looking at how households have recovered in the longer term.

The Disability and Inclusion Working Group contributed to research looking at the disability data needs of shelter practitioners to improve the delivery of inclusive shelter and settlements programs

The Environment Working Groups contributed a Chapter on shelter-focused Life Cycle Assessment and scorecard approach in the InterAction Roadmap for Research.

The Construction Working Group is looking at strategic partnerships to promote stronger linkages between academia and humanitarian partners to allow for sharing of knowledge to a wider audience.

Overall there is a significant amount of enthusiasm and activity around research in the Working Groups which could be harnessed to support future programming and advocacy.

### 3.4.2 Research Partners

The expertise to support shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises is currently predominantly driven by the discipline of architecture, populated by individual researchers and based across Europe and Australia. While individual researchers were in the majority, they often work together between research institutes, increasing opportunities for a broader focus. 5 multidisciplinary research centres were also identified.

There is also a wider group of research partners and learning organisations, outside of the scope of this study, who have the potential to contribute their capabilities. While not focussed specifically on shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises, they are interested in relevant thematic areas which could inform the research questions key to the GSC. These thematic areas include humanitarian assistance and housing, and a range of technical, sociological, and geographic concerns.

The objective of mapping research partners was to establish where existing connections exist between practitioners and researchers interested in shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises and to identify where potential future collaborations might be possible. The data is not intended to be exhaustive, but a snapshot of a network that will be built upon in the future.

Research partners with a specific interest in shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises were identified through two main routes. SAG members were asked to contribute information about research partners whom they had worked with before or planned to work with in the future. Research partners who were part of the interaction Roadmap for Research were also included. All research partners contacted were asked to provide information about their own research interests and any research networks they are part of. There also exists a wider group of research partners interested in related thematic areas, such as humanitarian crises or housing more generally, but the scope of this initial study was to identify those already working closely within the specific field of the GSC. Data was analysed according to disciplines, capacities, and locations.
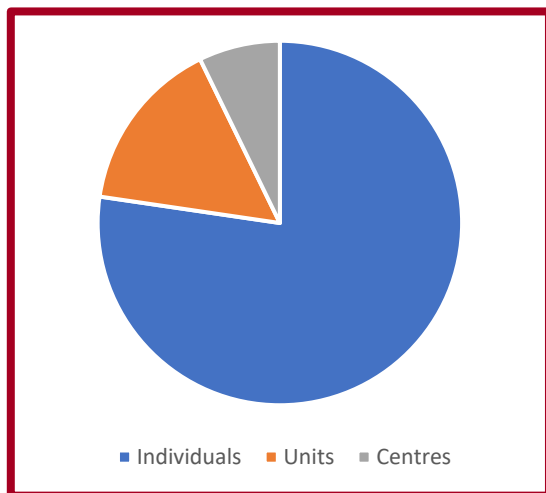
## Research Capacity



Figure 4: Research Partner Capacities.

Research capacity was measured according to whether the partner was a single researcher specialising within a broader discipline, a unit within a discipline including several researchers, or a research centre involving researchers in several disciplines. The majority of researchers with an interest in shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises are 15 individual researchers within a department with a broader focus. The mapping also identified 5 centres and 3 units where a critical mass of researchers are together focussed specifically on shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises.

## Disciplines

The discipline within which a research partner works determines to some extent the scope and purpose of their research. The majority of research partners are hosted or linked to an architecture department. 6 were linked to an engineering department and 4 had multidisciplinary capabilities across several disciplines, including health and the humanities. This focus on the built environment has advantages and limitations. Notably, few are hosted within International Development departments compared with Architecture departments. This may limit the scope of possible research since these disciples use different lenses and promote different priorities. For future research on the wider impacts of shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises, new partners in different disciplines may need to be found.
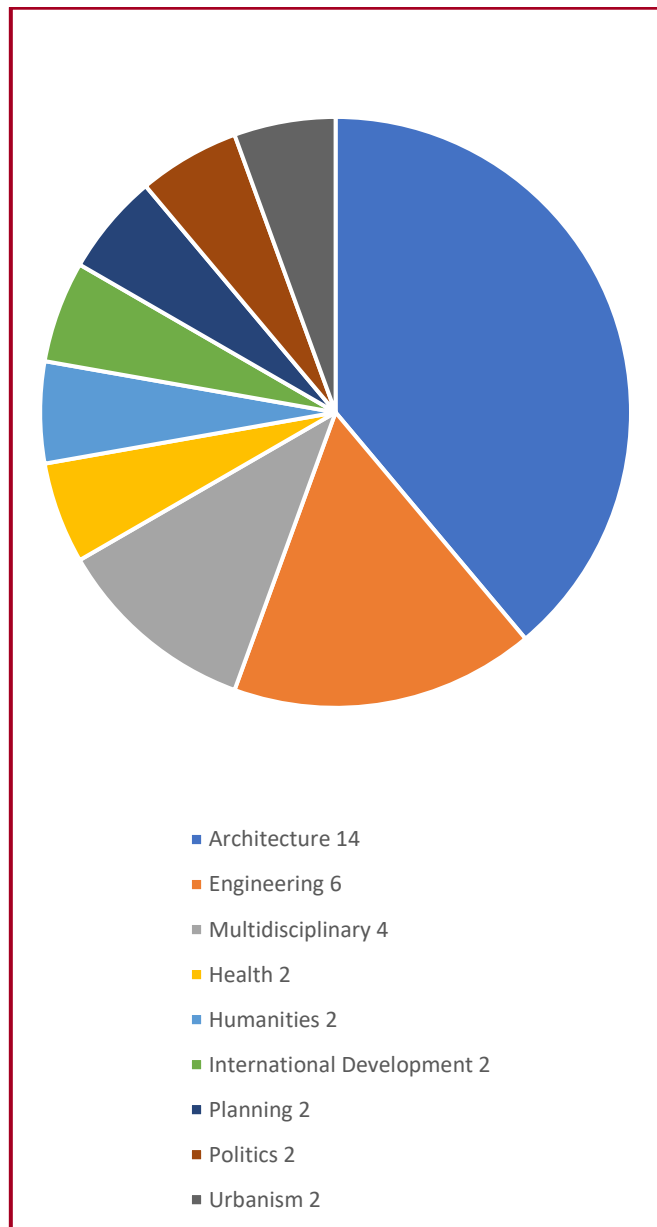


- Architecture 14
- Engineering 6
- Multidisciplinary 4
- Health 2
- Humanities 2
- International Development 2
- Planning 2
- Politics 2
- Urbanism 2

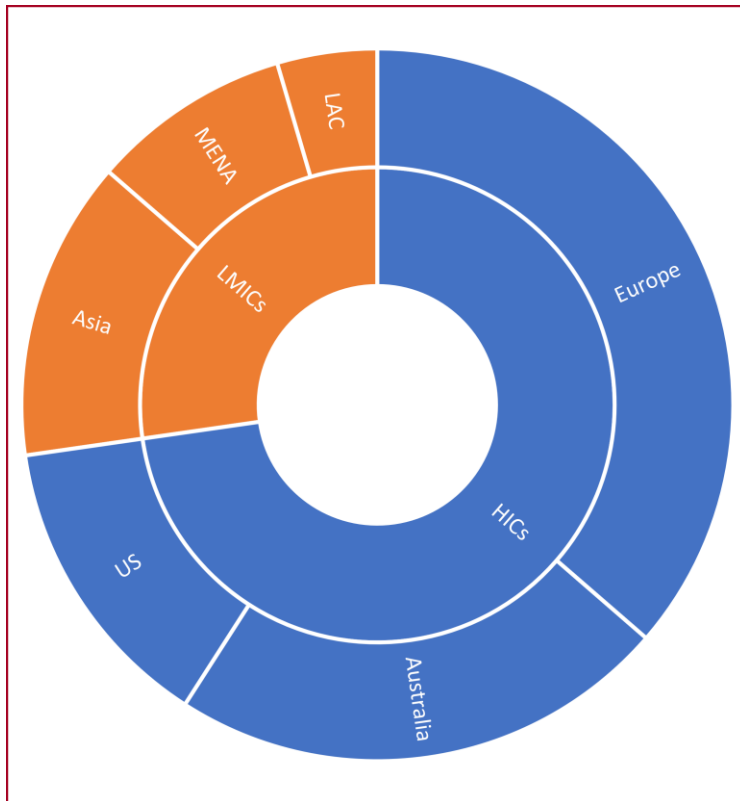Figure 5: Research Partner Disciplines.

Figure 6: Geographic and Economic Location
of Research Partners

## Locations

23 Research partners were identified with an interest in shelter and settlements in humanitarian crises. Of these, the majority are universities in Europe and Australia. Further partners were identified in the United States, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. The total partners were spread to 6 in Low or Middle-Income countries (LMICs) and 17 in High-Income Countries (HICs). In general universities in HICs were not well connected with those in LMICs, despite recent encouragement from some academic donors. This is an opportunity the GSC could explore.

## Conclusion

This report sets out a baseline for the GSC work on research from which a stronger evidence base can grow. The baseline demonstrates that a relevant and useful evidence base for shelter and settlements programming and advocacy in support of those affected by humanitarian crises will require causal, comparative, and in some cases descriptive research questions. It also demonstrated that for research work to be successful, research must be valued and harmonised with humanitarian response processes, and access to data must be well supported. The baseline focuses the GSC on research which will inform decisions in the thematic areas of longer-term recovery, cash and markets, and the wider impacts of shelter and settlements. Since this report has been compiled within a specific timeframe, the baseline is intended to be updated periodically.

# References

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## Annexes

### Annex A: Survey Questionnaire

## Survey of Cluster Coordinators' Research Priorities

Please answer the following questions in this Word document and then return the completed questionnaire to the Global Focal Point for Research at lizzie.babister@sheltercluster.org, keeping your GSC Coordinator copied.

### Question 1

**What kind of research do you find useful in terms of thematic areas, types of research and document formats?**

    a.   Thematic areas.
       *See here for examples, but be sure to contribute your own priorities.*

    b.   Types of research
       *For instance, Descriptive, (e.g. How many households are affected?) Comparative (e.g. Are male headed households recovering more successfully than female headed households?) or Causal (e.g. Why are male households recovering more successfully than female headed households?)*

    c.   Document formats.
       *Please explain the preferred formats, attach good examples or include URLs to explain what is useful in your context.*

### Question 2

**How and when do you use research?**
*For instance, you might reflect upon the times do you relied upon research to increase your knowledge and confidence, to inform your programming choices, or to influence people.*

### Question 3

**Which barriers do you experience when looking for research or creating new research?**
*Examples might include how you access research findings, how you secure capacity for research, or the quality of data.*

*This is the end of the survey. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.*
*Please return the completed questionnaire to the Global Focal Point for Research at lizzie.babister@sheltercluster.org, keeping your GSC Coordinator copied.*

## Annex B: All Thematic Priorities Identified by SAG Members

In total 45 research themes were identified by 11 members organisations of the SAG. A grouping exercise was carried out to identify common subjects in the research themes identified by individual agencies. The results of this exercise were as follows:

| Common areas | Number of times this theme was identified |
|---|---|
| Wider impact (especially health) | 6 |
| Cash and markets | 5 |
| Conflict | 2 |
| Space standards | 2 |
| Self-recovery | 2 |
| HLP | 2 |
| Long-term impact and recovery | 2 |

The full report, Parrack C, (2020), can be found here.

## Annex C: All Thematic Priorities Identified by Cluster Coordinators

In total 28 research themes were identified by Cluster Coordinators in 20 countries.

| Thematic Priorities | Number of countries |
|---|---|
| The Longer Term, including Recovery. | 12 |
| Cash and Markets | 9 |
| Wider Impacts | 8 |
| GBV | 6 |
| HLP | 5 |
| Climate Change | 5 |
| Local Partners | 3 |
| Emergency Shelter | 3 |
| Local Materials | 3 |
| Inclusion | 3 |
| Underfunding | 2 |
| Winterisation | 2 |
| Non-camp Approaches | 2 |
| Conflict | 2 |
| Communicating with Households | 2 |
| Returns | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Rental | 1 |
| Host Families | 1 |
| Flexibility to security | 1 |
| Value Chain Analysis | 1 |
| Space Standards | 1 |
| Participation | 1 |
| Project Management | 1 |
| Housing typologies | 1 |
| Opportunities for Development | 1 |
| Terminology | 1 |
| Gender in Shelter Teams | 1 |
| Asbestos | 1 |