CASE STUDY | MYANMAR 2013-2016 / COORDINATION

KEYWORDS: Coordination, Technical assistance, Advocacy, Training

CRISIS	**Myanmar, multiple crises:** • **Internal conflict in Kachin/Northern Shan states** (2011-ongoing) • **Inter-communal violence in Rakhine state** (Jun and Oct 2012) • **Cyclone Komen floods** (Aug-Dec 2015)
TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED	**Rakhine: 145,000** displaced **Kachin/Northern Shan: 100,000** displaced **2015 floods: 1.7 million** displaced **150,000** people with moderately or severely damaged houses (Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan, 2016).
PROJECT LOCATIONS	**Myanmar country-wide, national and subnational level.**
PROJECT OUTPUTS	**Shelter/NFI/CCCM coordination provided at national and subnational level** (2013-2016).
OUTCOME INDICATORS	**100%** of IDPs living in temporary shelters complying with internationally recognized standards. **100%** of IDP camps with appropriate infrastructure supporting effective camp management.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster in Myanmar has provided – and continues to support – coordination of shelter and CCCM agencies at national and subnational level through a decentralized approach, since January 2013. The national level provided overall direction, Information Management support and liaised with national authorities, donors and the Humanitarian Country Team, as well as with the Global Shelter and CCCM Clusters; two subnational clusters were established for operational response. The overall goals were to provide emergency shelter and to seek durable solutions for populations affected by violence and disasters. This case study focuses on the coordination structures and how they evolved over time.

1 Jan 2013: **National Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster established.**

2 Apr 2013: **Rakhine State Government and Cluster Lead Agency agree on shelter design and standards** (eight-unit long-houses).

3 Dec 2013: **Completion of 2,843 eight-unit longhouses in Rakhine State** (see A.16 in *Shelter Projects 2013-2014*).
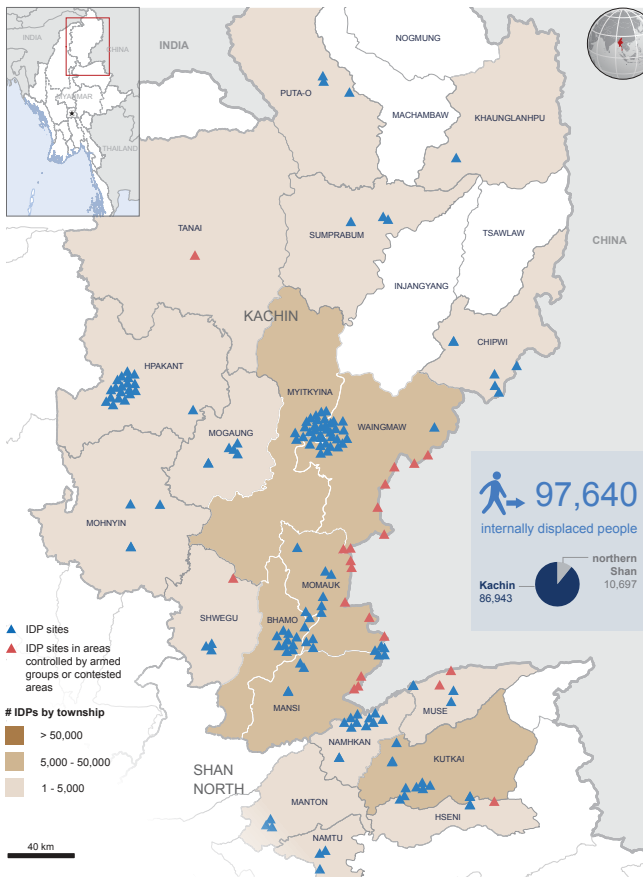
4 Aug 2015: **Deployment of Flood Response Coordination Team.**

5 Dec 2015: **Departure of Flood Response Coordination Team and hand-over to national Cluster.**
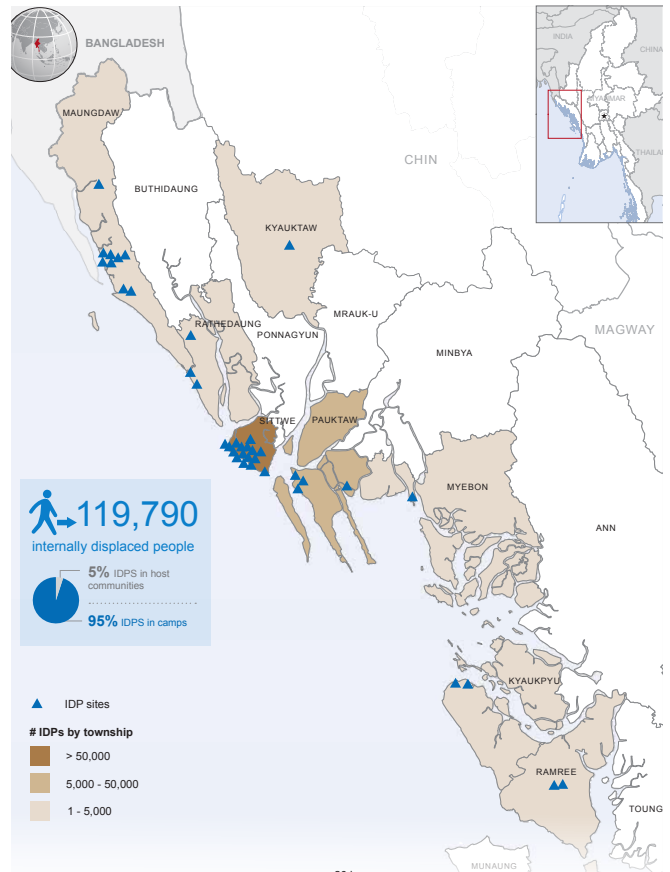
STRENGTHS

+ Adequate dedicated capacity since cluster activation.
+ 48-hour deployment of the Coordinator and continuity for 4 years.
+ Inclusive coordination mechanism for all partners.
+ Regular engagement with other clusters and sectors, at all levels.
+ Sustained advocacy contributed to high government involvement.
+ The merged Shelter/NFI/CCCM subnational Cluster facilitated operational partners agreement on common designs and guidance.

WEAKNESSES

- Over 200,000 individuals continued to be in a protracted displacement situation.
- Delayed Cluster activation In Kachin/Northern Shan.
- Compromised design solutions did not reach minimum standards.
- The protracted crisis has not allowed constructive discussion on possible exit strategy or handover.
- Lack of durable solutions led to a constant and costly cycle of repair and maintenance.

Nearly 100,000 people were internally displaced due to violence, across many IDP sites in Kachin and Northern Shan States (UN OCHA, Aug 2016).

In Rhakine State, internally displaced persons were living in many IDP sites coordinated by the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster (UN OCHA, Jul 2016).

CONTEXT

Despite the internationally welcomed transition to democracy in 2011, after decades of isolation, Myanmar remains one of the poorest countries in South-East Asia. The relatively low level of development and wide-spread poverty is often further hampered by heavy monsoon rains and frequent natural disasters (such as typhoons Nargis in 2008[1] and Giri in 2010). Myanmar's population make-up includes multiple ethnic groups which have long opposed the government's policy of centralization.

SITUATION IN KACHIN/NORTHERN SHAN

Fighting between the Myanmar governmental army and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) broke out in June 2011, after a 17 year cease-fire, which led to the displacement of an estimated 100,000 people, as of August 2013[2]. In 2016, approximately 50% of IDP camps were located in non-government controlled areas, with limited access to services and international humanitarian assistance.

SITUATION IN RAKHINE STATE

For more information on Rakhine State, see case study A.2.

Inter-communal violence between the Buddhist population and Rohingya Muslims in 2012 resulted in massive destruction of homes and displacement across the state. The main IDP caseload fled urban areas and settled into rural camps around Sittwe, with heavy restrictions on freedom of movement and limited access to services outside the camps.

[1] See case studies A.19-A.20 in *Shelter Projects 2010* for projects in response to Typhoon Nargis.
[2] Kachin & Northern Shan Shelter Cluster Strategic Framework, Sep 2013.

NATIONAL SHELTER CLUSTER

Before the Cluster was activated, the lead agency had been coordinating the shelter and CCCM response in Kachin (since 2011) and in Rakhine (since 2012). Support was requested from the global level Clusters for response coordination, resource mobilization and scale up. In January 2013, the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster was formally activated to respond to large-scale displacement in predominantly camp and camp-like settings across Rakhine and Kachin/Northern Shan states. While merged clusters are not preferred in IDP situations, in the case of Myanmar, Shelter and Camp Coordination partners overlapped to an extent that justified bringing the two sectors together. Local organizations also expressed preference for one common forum.
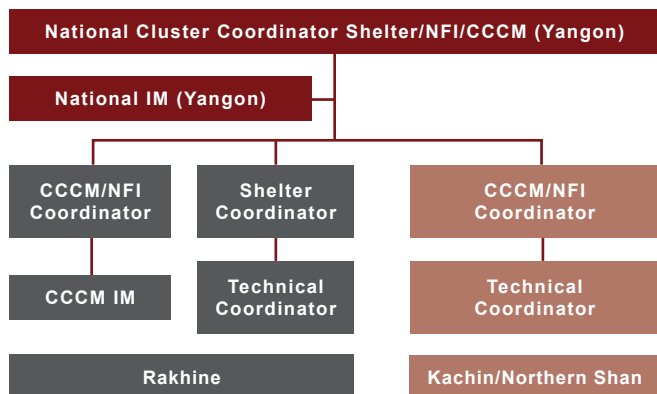
The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) deployed an experienced, dedicated, national Coordinator within 48 hours of Cluster activation, to head the newly formed national Cluster team in Yangon. The Cluster aimed to ensure adequate temporary accommodation (according to agreed international standards and government requirements) using eight-unit shelters known as "long-houses"[3].

SUBNATIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURE

The coordination team had to address two displacement contexts, in two different geographical locations, which called for a decentralized subnational coordination approach. A merged Shelter/NFI/CCCM subnational Cluster was established in Kachin/Northern Shan states to coordinate the response across the 167 camps. Due to the highly volatile situation and the larger caseload in Rakhine, the subnational

[3] This is described in case study A.16 in *Shelter Projects 2013-2014*.

Cluster in Sittwe town was set up differently – separate Shelter and CCCM/NFI Clusters – both under the coordination of the national Cluster Coordinator in Yangon.

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│ National Cluster Coordinator Shelter/NFI/CCCM (Yangon)   │
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        │ National IM (Yangon) │
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  │ CCCM/NFI  │  │  Shelter  │    │ CCCM/NFI  │
  │Coordinator│  │Coordinator│    │Coordinator│
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  │  CCCM IM  │  │ Technical │    │ Technical │
  │           │  │Coordinator│    │Coordinator│
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  │       Rakhine        │    │ Kachin/Northern Shan │
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Myanmar Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster Organigram, 2013-2015.

RESPONSE IN KACHIN/NORTHERN SHAN

The initial response was carried out by the local community and faith-based organizations through the construction of **temporary five-unit shelters in camp-like settings,** evolving mainly around church compounds. While having distinct advantages (knowledge of the local context, access to non-governmental areas, extensive networks and positive relation with state and local authorities), the initial response suffered from the organizations' lack of technical and sectoral expertise, as well as limited donor confidence and support. Temporary shelters provided in the early stages of the emergency varied significantly across the 167 camps in terms of covered living area, quality of construction materials used, occupancy criteria and surrounding infrastructure.

By March 2013, there were 85,000 registered IDPs and an additional 35,000 individuals in need of humanitarian assistance. The international community engaged late and access to non-government controlled areas was limited. This caused a lack of basic data to support identification of gaps and inform shelter and camp management response. The Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster in Kachin **piloted and supported a substantial camp profiling exercise** in March 2013, to gather baseline disaggregated data on IDPs. As of September 2016, five rounds of camp profiling have been coordinated by the Cluster and carried out by partners on the ground[4].

The main challenge for the Cluster subnational team was to establish a formal coordination mechanism and help improving the response, **18 months after its start.** The Cluster benefited from a dedicated subnational Coordinator and a shelter technical expert supported by the Cluster lead agency.

The main objective in 2013 was to provide **temporary shelters to meet the needs of an additional 10,000 IDPs.** This was achieved through consultations with beneficiaries and local shelter actors on culturally appropriate shelter designs and harmonization, and provision of guidance on Build Back Safer techniques. In July 2013, a technical working group (TWiG) **agreed on a five-unit shelter design,** which has been implemented by all partners since. In July 2016, the TWiG adapted the design to take into account feedback from beneficiaries and partners,

availability of local materials, minimum standards and other cultural considerations. Additionally, the Cluster lead agency **conducted 12 trainings** for approximately 300 Camp Managers, Camp Focal Points and Government actors, across 84 camps[5].

Additionally, **repairs had to be conducted on the shelters built in 2011**. This was done through an owner-driven approach (supported by the Cluster), bringing existing shelters up to Sphere standards, to avoid overcrowding and improve privacy and protection. Temporary shelters have a life span of 2-3 years and require shelter actors in the area to engage in a constant and costly cycle of maintenance and repair, until durable solutions become feasible.

RESPONSE IN RAKHINE

Immediately after the violence, emergency tents were provided, while the Cluster lead agency provided tarpaulins, rope and tents at the end of 2012. Additionally, after the second wave of violence in October 2012, the government completed 525 temporary shelters and "long-houses" for approximately 29,000 IDPs, across 10 townships. Some of the camps were established in 2012-2013, others were clusters of long-houses built within (or in close proximity to) the IDPs' villages of origin.

In April 2013, the Cluster lead agency joined a high-level delegation to Rakhine, to clarify the maximum capacity of the international community and persuade the Rakhine State Government (RSG) to contribute to the shelter response. The initial design used by the RSG envisaged the construction of 10-unit long-houses, providing a living space of only 2m² per person. **The Cluster advocated for the shelters to meet the Sphere indicator** of 3.5m² per person and managed to reduce the number of families per shelter from ten to eight. However, with an average of 5.5 family members, IDPs ended up occupying a space of 2.9m² per person. On the basis of this agreement with the RSG, Cluster partners achieved 51% coverage of identified temporary shelter needs in June 2013 and 99% by December[6].
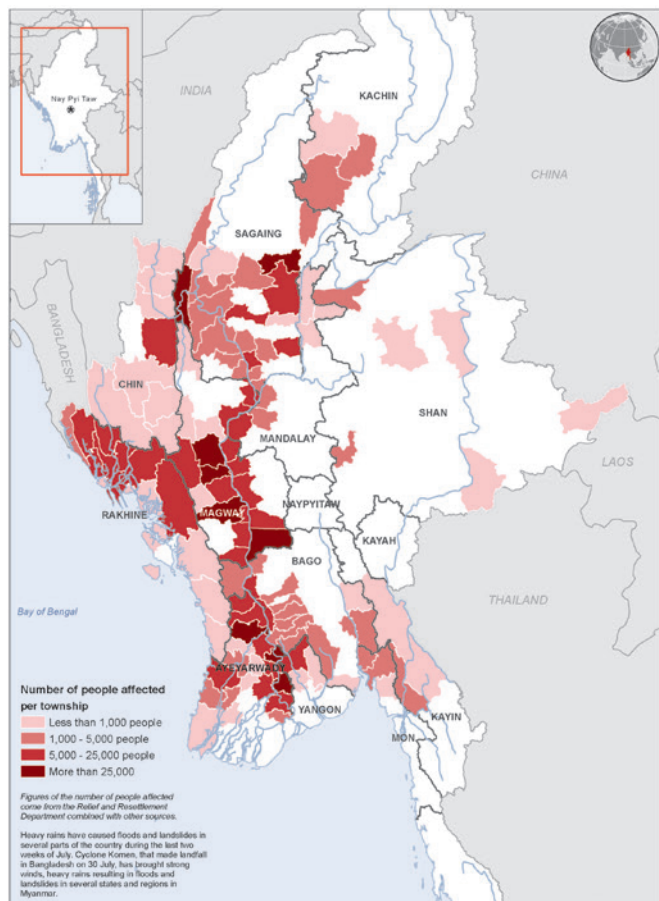

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Temporary shelters were built in IDP sites for people fleeing violence.

During 2013 and 2014, a TWiG co-chaired by the Department for Rural Development (DRD) **agreed on minimum technical standards and designs for temporary and permanent shelter,** and further developed an effective shelter and maintenance programme. The established co-chairing arrangement

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[4] Analysis of Camp Profiling Round 5 Kachin & Northern Shan, http://bit.ly/2jK46LR

[5] Kachin Response Plan Myanmar March-December 2013, http://bit.ly/2j8MjNK.
[6] Rakhine State Shelter Cluster Strategic Framework, http://bit.ly/2iQlZKh.

allowed Cluster partners to **develop strong professional relationships with the RSG** and improved the previously poor level of coordination between government departments and international organizations. Additionally, constructive government engagement trickled down to the local level.

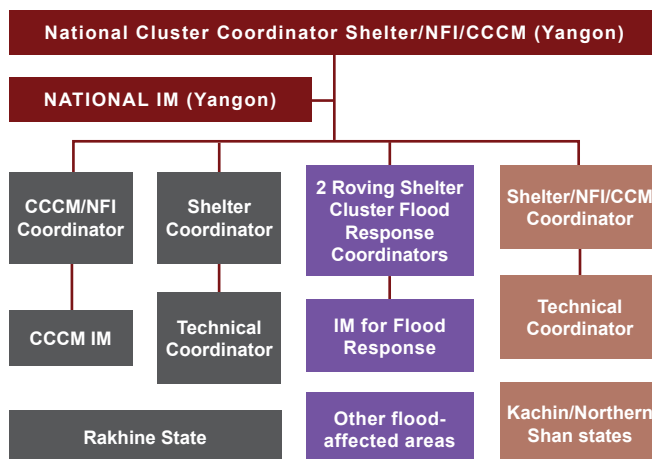*Several areas were affected by the floods in 2015 (UN OCHA, 10 Aug 2015).*

In 2014, the Shelter Cluster, both in Rakhine and at national level, renewed its advocacy efforts with the RSG to take the lead in addressing the protracted IDP situation through durable solutions. It also offered technical support on design and construction. In 2015, the RSG supported individual housing solutions through cash grants for 25,000 individuals[7]. **Attaining durable solutions and advocacy with the government remained key objectives** in the 2016-2017 strategy. Since 2013, both subnational Clusters have continuously engaged in preparedness activities, tracking of emergency stocks and local response capacity. Both have also advocated for early recovery and coordinated with relevant clusters and sectors (most notably Protection – to ensure protection mainstreaming – and WASH – to ensure sufficient links between shelter interventions and WASH infrastructure).

SITUATION AFTER THE 2015 FLOODS

In July and August 2015, heavy monsoon rains, combined with the effect of Cyclone Komen on the region, affected nine million people across 12 of the country's 14 states, causing heavy loss of homes, livelihoods, crops and food stocks. Floods and landslides killed 117 people and temporarily dis-

[7] See case study A.2.

places 1.7 million. The Government reported that the highest numbers of affected people were in Ayeyarwady, Sagaing and Magway regions, while Rakhine suffered the highest number of destroyed homes. The Humanitarian Country Team agreed that the response to these floods would be coordinated by the existing Clusters, rather than creating new ones.

Myanmar Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster Organigram, Aug-Dec 2015.

FLOOD RESPONSE 2015

Given the extensive reach and impact of the natural disaster, the GSC co-lead agency for natural disasters deployed a coordination team to support the subnational level. The two GSC co-leads agreed that the newly deployed team would coordinate the response outside Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states. **The flood shelter coordination team (FSCT)** – consisting of two dedicated Coordinators and one information manager – **was set up to operate under the strategic guidance of the national Cluster.** The FSCT organized shelter partner meetings at the same location and date of the regular national Cluster meeting, allowing agencies to attend both meetings.

The FSCT used and triangulated government data to coordinate the shelter response in seven regions, developed a reporting mechanisms and a dedicated webpage[8]. It operated from Yangon, with field trips to affected locations, to assess housing damage, households' needs and existing gaps in the response. By September 2015, Cluster partners provided emergency shelter to 9,525 households in all regions (outside Rakhine, Kachin and Stan states) through a combination of shelter repair kits, tarpaulins and tents[9].

WIDER IMPACTS OF THE CLUSTER IN MYANMAR

The clear mandate and geographical separation of responsibilities between the two Cluster lead agencies, as well as the close collaboration with the national Cluster team, ensured that the coordination of this response was successful. **An agreement between the two global co-leads** existed before the floods, and was further solidified and practically tested through the 2015 collaboration. This allows the timely deployment of coordination teams and development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and technical guidelines.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

People in an IDP site, coordinated and managed by merged Shelter/CCCM Clusters (Tat Kone Baptist Church IDP camp in Kachin State, Nov 2013).

The Cluster coordinated the construction of temporary shelters for people fleeing inter-communal violence in Rakhine State (Ohn Taw Gyi IDP camp, May 2013).

STRENGTHS

+ Adequate dedicated capacity since Cluster activation, and benefits from using the **lead agency existing capacities.**

+ 48-hour deployment of the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Coordinator (and continuity since then). This provided **predictability, extensive knowledge** on the context and the response, as well as **strong personal and professional relations** with the wider international community, local partners, authorities and donors.

+ Inclusive coordination mechanism for all partners to engage, consult and disseminate best practices. 21 Cluster partners have been regularly attending meetings.

+ Regular engagement with other clusters and sectors, at all levels (especially Protection, WASH and Early Recovery), as well as donors and relevant stakeholders.

+ Sustained advocacy from the Cluster lead agency and partners contributed to high government involvement in Rakhine State. Many shelters built by the government used Cluster-agreed technical standards and designs.

+ The merged Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster in Kachin/Northern Shan managed to **bring local operational partners together**, agree on a common shelter design and technical guidance, and create **links with Protection and WASH**.

WEAKNESSES

- More than 200,000 individuals across Rakhine, Kachin and Northern Shan states **continue to live in situations of protracted displacement**. As of 2016, the Cluster continued its advocacy for durable solutions.

- In Kachin/Northern Shan, **the Cluster was activated 18 months after** the conflict-related displacement. Delayed activation of clusters may lead local organizations to provide a **sectorial response without the necessary technical guidance and coordination**.

- The compromised solution reached on the final design and size of the long-houses implemented by the government **fell short of the international standard** of 3.5m^2 per person.

- The Cluster has been active for four years, while needs have remained almost the same since 2013, which has **not allowed for constructive discussion on possible exit strategies or handover**. Clusters are, by definition, time-bound and needs-based coordination mechanisms. Handover of coordination responsibilities, or deactivation where needs cease to exist, should be discussed early on[10].

- Lack of durable solutions four years into the Cluster response, led to a **constant and costly cycle of repair and maintenance**. This was due to the decision of the Cluster in 2013 to explicitly focus on the provision of temporary shelters, with a life-span of two years, to avoid contributing to permanent encampment of the affected populations.

[10] IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination, http://bit.ly/2oseRYT.

LEARNINGS

- **Early deployment** of Cluster coordination team, **adequate staffing** of key Cluster roles (Coordinator, Information Manager and Technical Support) **and access to the Cluster lead agency's** existing institutional and human resources are essential for setting up a functioning national Cluster.

- **Coordination mechanisms should be as close to operational partners and beneficiaries as possible**, to allow for adequate data collection, gap analysis, community engagement and operational response, as well as to encourage ownership, adequate exit strategies and sustainability.

- **Pre-existing arrangements and close cooperation between Cluster lead agencies at the global level** can ensure that coordination mechanisms are not duplicated, information is shared openly and that teams operate within a clear mandate and towards the same strategic objective.

- **Coordination teams arriving late** in the response **should engage partners cautiously and prove the added value** of coordination (including humanitarian standards, Build Back Safer approaches, and technical guidelines).