Global Shelter Team Strategy

August 2026 update

Our Vision

CARE's Global Shelter Team believes that an adequate, dignified and safe shelter is fundamental to the process of recovery after disaster. This belief is at the heart of our people-centred approach to responding to crises provoked by natural hazards, conflict, and displacement. Regardless of the magnitude or cause of the crisis, losing one's home is invariably devastating, and adequate shelter is critical for restoring stability and dignity. The Shelter Team promotes evidence-based, inclusive programming and advocates for adequate housing as a human right. We are guided by our theory of change and the principles (box below) underpinning our approach to Shelter support.

Shelter is one of the four core sectors of CARE's humanitarian work. It reinforces our global reputation and gives CARE International UK a recognised leadership role within the CARE Confederation. The Shelter Team links research with real-world practice, improves programme funding success and drives better programme quality. Our technical expertise is central to advancing CARE's mission to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice.

If...

- Shelter responses are timely and tailored to local contexts and evolving needs...
- Shelter responses are inclusive, gender-sensitive, holistic and evidence-based...
- Guidance, recommendations and tools reflect communities' priorities as well as practitioners' experience...

...then...

- ...in the short term, affected populations access safe, dignified shelter and begin to realise their basic rights.
- ...in the medium term, shelter solutions are sustainable and climate-resilient, enabling long-term recovery and resilience for people affected by crisis and disaster.

Guiding Principles for Shelter at CARE

- Affected populations are always the first responders. Shelter activities should be community led and guided by households' priorities and capacities.
- Shelter solutions must be adapted for the unique context of each crisis. Off-the-shelf solutions are inappropriate beyond the emergency phase.
- Gender, age, disability and intersectionality shape shelter needs and capacities. Responses should be gender-sensitive and inclusive.
- Research and practice should be linked, ensuring learning within and between contexts and the development of evidence-based best practice.
- Shelter should be linked with other sectors (e.g., WASH, protection, livelihoods) and will benefit from the development capacities of CARE country offices.

Our Roles

- **Support to CARE country offices**
  - We provide timely and appropriate technical support to CARE and its local implementing partners, whether through deployment or remotely.
  - We support CARE country offices to develop emergency preparedness planning, response strategies, funding proposals and bespoke training.
  - We develop evidence-based tools and guidelines to reinforce CARE's core principles, such as gender equity and accountability, ensure consistency across programmes, and promote CARE's approach to Shelter programming, underpinned by our guiding principles.
  - We harmonise, define and encourage minimum standards, for example for gender and climate-smart shelters.
  - We maintain and develop the CARE shelter roster of surge capacity personnel.
- **Knowledge management**
  - We gather, generate and share information on best practice in Shelter programming.
  - We foster relationships within and beyond CARE to strengthen working links with climate change adaptation, women's leadership, environment, and other areas.
  - We connect research with practice by developing tools to facilitate applied learning in Shelter programming.
  - We validate Shelter data as part of CARE's PIIRS (Project/Programme Information and Impact Reporting System) data collection and reporting system.
- **Global leadership**
  - We represent CARE in the Strategic Advisory Group of the Global Shelter, Land & Site Coordination Cluster, contributing to global-level Shelter strategy and co-leading both the Recovery and Gender, Diversity & Inclusion communities of practice.
  - Our research is highly regarded within the sector and produces inter- and intra-sector webinars and reports, often endorsed by the Global Shelter Cluster, to inform programming and increase understanding of the wider positive impacts of good Shelter initiatives.
  - We nurture existing research and practice partnerships (e.g., with universities) and find opportunities for new ones in both research and programme implementation.

Our Thematic Priorities

- **Wider impacts of Shelter initiatives**
  We recognise the profound, positive impact and multiplier effects that adequate housing, including dignified and safe, post-crisis shelter, has on health, mental health and well-being, and livelihoods; see ***Towards Healthier Housing in Humanitarian Settings*** (2020) and ***Mindful Sheltering*** (2021).
- **Climate change adaptation**
  An essential aim of our work is to promote the need for climate change adaptation and to include measures to minimise environmental degradation in all our Shelter programming; see ***Sheltering in the Climate Crisis*** (2025).
- **Shelter and gender**
  The ***Gender & Shelter; Good Programming Guidance*** (2016) is regarded as the sector's definitive publication on gender and shelter. It is currently being updated through an inclusive process with several country offices to integrate intersectionality and practical field realities.
- **Supporting Shelter self-recovery**
  CARE's pioneering approach that supports the self-recovery of those affected by disaster continues to be a priority. The approach aligns with locally led ways of working; ***Pathways Home. Guidance for Supporting Shelter Self-Recovery*** (2022) is the first comprehensive guidance for this approach.