The Settlements Approach, also known as the Area-Based Approach, is an approach to response and recovery that is characterised as:

- geographically targeted,
- inclusive and
- multi-sectoral

It is not new:

Area Based Approaches builds on experiences of urban and regional planners working on community renewal through geographically-based, multi-sectoral initiatives in poor and vulnerable locations since the 1960s and 1970s.

It is Gaining momentum:

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s call in 2010 for a “paradigm shift in humanitarian assistance in urban areas, based on a community-based - rather than - an individual beneficiary approach.

The Habitat III Summit, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises and strategy papers by OFDA, ECHO, and UNHCR have acknowledged and promoted their application.
The GSC Urban Settlements WG was established in May 2017 to further the piloting and application of area based approaches, and advocating at the global level. Overall aims are to:

- Identify best practices and lessons learnt
- Develop tools and guidance on settlement approaches and their application based on proven case studies.
- Link with other clusters, Engage with relevant non-cluster platforms and actors.

What has occurred so far:

- Definitions paper: Area/settlement based approaches
- Settlement case studies compendium: 30 case studies in total and macro analysis
- Championed into Sphere 2018:
- Piloting Area Based Coordination: Funding received from GSC to pilot in an agreed urban crisis in 2018
- Continued working group sessions: every 6 weeks, participation by 20 organisations from other cluster too.
Focusing on Area Based Approaches in three strands

Area Based Assessments

Area Based Coordination

Area Based Programming