

ShelterBox Frequently Asked Questions

PREPARATION & DEPLOYMENTS

How do you monitor what's going on around the world?

We receive alerts via text and email from Alert Net and the Global Disaster Alert & Coordination System (GDACS). When a disaster happens, these sites provide us with basic information. We also receive world weather reports from the Met Office and they help us to track weather related disasters, such as cyclones and typhoons, allowing us to predict where and when it will make landfall. We also receive alerts from G4S that notify us of changing global security threats which could trigger manmade disasters. When we become aware of a disaster occurring, we immediately contact partners in the country for further information. For every one disaster we respond to, we've been monitoring at least four other disasters.

How quickly can you respond?

ShelterBox aims to get its boxes and a response team to the scene of a disaster – anywhere worldwide – within two to three days of a major natural disaster. The exact time will depend on the circumstances and we can only distribute aid within safe and achievable, operational parameters. Chronic disasters such as conflict or famine may have a slower response time as the crisis or disaster may evolve over a period before it reaches a stage when humanitarian intervention is required. Where need is less clear, we may send a reconnaissance team in before any aid to see how much need there is and whether our equipment is suitable. On each occasion, we will take advice from the UK's Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and other relevant bodies. However, our aim is always to provide immediate aid wherever possible.

Who decides where you send aid?

The decisions on whether to send aid, how many boxes and what goes in the boxes are made by the Operations Team and ShelterBox Response Team members in the field, based on the identified need and available resources at the time of the disaster. ShelterBox constantly monitors situations around the world through specialist channels, allowing it to make informed decisions about any response. As well as initiating deployments of emergency shelter independently, it also responds to requests for assistance from other aid agencies and government organizations.

How does aid then get to its destination?

Aid is delivered to the disaster area by whatever means are appropriate and accompanied by volunteer ShelterBox Response Teams (SRTs). SRTs will charter vehicles locally and work with whatever other organizations are appropriate. These could include: other aid agencies; local armed forces, police and government bodies; Rotary and other local non-governmental organizations (NGO's) bodies. SRTs are used to finding alternative forms of transport, whether using donkeys in the mountains of Kashmir or building rafts in Sri Lanka to reach communities cut off by flooding.

Do you keep boxes ready to go?

ShelterBox has boxes in strategic locations around the world, either key transportation hubs or locations that are close to areas where we regularly deploy. These pre-positioned boxes are in places like Dubai, Singapore, Melbourne, Panama, Curacao and Nairobi. ShelterBox is also part of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) network, which holds emergency relief goods in warehouses in five continents. Having pre-positioned aid significantly reduces our response time.

Who takes care of the tents when families move into their new housing?

When the SRT sets up the tents, they usually work with local people, for example representatives from the local community, local Rotarians or representatives from local aid agencies, to train them how to look after the tents. This includes maintaining the tents while the families are in them, good pitching is key to increasing the lifespan of the tent, and helping to ensure that they are stored or disposed of responsibly once the families are ready to move back into their own homes. ShelterBox's Operations department also carries out monitoring and evaluation visits after a deployment to check that the response was effective and to follow up on any issues with the equipment that was provided.

What happens with the used ShelterBoxes?

ShelterBoxes are given as a gift from the donor to the recipient. Many recipients find a use for the empty box, such as for water storage or to keep their belongings dry. ShelterBoxes have even been used as a cradle or a mobile

library. After some disasters, if the contents are still in good condition, the recipients pack them back into the boxes and store them for future use by the community. It would not be feasible or economical for ShelterBox to go and collect and transport back all of the used boxes. Taking the equipment away or providing used and possibly damaged equipment to families could also diminish the dignity that we try to preserve.

Are there ever any problems with ShelterBoxes being stolen at the destination?

ShelterBox takes care to ensure that there is a safe and effective distribution plan in place at the destination. Trained ShelterBox Response Team members work closely with local partners to ensure that the aid is well looked after upon arrival in country is distributed fairly to families in need. ShelterBox carries out risk assessments for every deployment and if extra security is required then this is arranged.

Does ShelterBox make arrangements for water and sanitation in its camps?

Trained ShelterBox Response Team (SRT) members work closely with partner organizations to ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene are given priority wherever ShelterBox tents are deployed. We will not set up a camp if adequate facilities can not be provided, as it could contribute to the problems faced by the families. One of the key tasks of the SRT who accompany the aid is to identify suitable locations to set up the tents, which includes making sure that water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are available.

EQUIPMENT

How many people is a ShelterBox tent for?

A ShelterBox tent is designed to accommodate an extended family. We no longer call the tent a 10 person tent. This is partly because we would then be dictating how many people should live in it. But in addition, international humanitarian guidelines indicate that 10 people should not live in a space of that size and each individual should have 3.5 square meters of covered space for living. Therefore, the correct terminology to use is "extended family tent" and if people ask how many people live in it, we say it is dependent on the culture and the amount of shelter available.

How many types of tent does ShelterBox have?

Three. The disaster relief tent and midi tent. We also supply UNHCR standard tents in some situations (refugee camps, high security situation)

What is a midi tent?

Midi tents are a more compact, lighter-weight version of the ShelterBox disaster relief tent. They have been designed to offer a solution for varying occupancy levels and disaster conditions. The benefits of midi tents are that they are smaller to transport, faster to distribute, easier to put up and take up less space. They are therefore ideal for responses where space is at a premium or where temporary shelter is required for a shorter amount of time. They are also more portable for families who may need to move the tent regularly. This new option enables ShelterBox to target aid effectively and to make donors' money go further.

Which tent can be modified for cold weather climates, and how?

The disaster relief tent can be modified for particularly cold weather by attaching a thermal layer between the outer and inner skins.

How big is the box and what does it weigh?

Each box is 24" (570mm) wide by 33" (842mm) long by 22" (602mm) deep – giving a capacity of 40.7gallons (185 litres). Fully packed, a box weighs between 110lbs and 130lbs (50 to 60kg).

Does ShelterBox always send complete boxes?

No. The aid that ShelterBox sends will be customized to suit the particular needs created by a disaster. In some situations, specific equipment is needed, such as additional tool kits or additional cold weather clothes and blankets. In some cases, only tents are required and they are sent on pallets without the boxes in order to save space.

When does ShelterBox send stoves?

Stoves are not sent automatically with each box. They are sent when requested by the ShelterBox Response Team carrying out the needs assessment. In camps, there are often communal cooking facilities removing the need for stoves and not all cultures use stoves, so they are only distributed when needed to make best use of donors' money.

Is there a lighting solution available?

Yes, ShelterBox can provide a solar lamp. One lamp is packed in each box and more can be sent if required.

Does the pack of the box vary according to the type of disaster being responded to?

Yes. The SRT will let Operations department know what is most needed in the country and where possible the pack will be done to reflect that need. We have pre-positioned boxes prepared for both hot and cold climates. For example, there was no need for mosquito nets in the boxes that were sent to Turkey following the earthquakes in October and November 2011, but extra blankets and ground sheets were deemed useful.

Why is there no First Aid kit in the ShelterBox?

ShelterBox provides a shelter based kit. There are other organizations that specialize in providing medical aid, so we leave medical support and provisions to them. In addition, we cannot send perishable items and First Aid kits tend to include items that have an expiry date. We do however support medical needs in the immediate aftermath of a major disaster and often our tents will be used as temporary hospitals and recovery units when medical facilities have been destroyed.

Is the box and its contents environmentally safe? Is any part of the box recycled?

The kit is designed primarily to save lives, so quality comes first and foremost. The box needs to be robust and durable to potentially last a number of years in pre-positioned locations. It is also a functional part of the aid delivered and is used by families in a whole number of ways even once they have rebuilt their homes. However, we are aware of the need for an environmentally sustainable approach and environmental issues will be considered in future procurement.

Who monitors the companies that make the contents of ShelterBoxes?

ShelterBox has a procurement policy that requests information of key suppliers in the form of declaration of compliance and, if a major supplier, a visit to factories. The standards within this policy draw on The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other internationally recognized standards.

Is it possible to purchase a ShelterBox or ShelterBox tent?

ShelterBox currently does not produce tents or other equipment for commercial sale. We only produce ShelterBoxes to be delivered as part of a deployment following a disaster.

FUNDING & DONATIONS**Where does ShelterBox funding come from?**

ShelterBox is predominantly funded by public donations. The project now receives donations from supporters worldwide, from individuals to Rotary clubs and companies to schools. We are also part of the Department for International Development's (DFID) Rapid Response Facility that allows us to access funding within 72 hours of a disaster, enabling us to do what we do best – delivering emergency shelter and equipment to families in the shortest time possible. Public donations continue to be of vital importance to us as the Rapid Response Fund will only be activated in the event of a large-scale crisis. We do not receive funding from the DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee).

How much does a ShelterBox cost?

\$1000 (or the equivalent in affiliate currency) is an indicative cost to deliver the ShelterBox Solution to wherever in the world it is needed. Please be clear that this is not the exact cost of a box and its contents but a representation of the average cost to send ShelterBox aid to people in need and cover essential operating costs. The aid may take slightly different forms depending on the needs of the people affected. For example, in some situations only tents are required and not the rest of the contents of the box.

Why do donors have to wait to receive the tracking number for their ShelterBox?

ShelterBox assigns a box number to the donor as soon as we receive the donation – i.e. as soon as a web donation is processed or a check is received in the mail. It might take a few days for the donor to receive their notification email or letter by mail. There might be some difference in time scale if the donation is received via a ShelterBox Affiliate, as the donation has to be processed through each organization and therefore the notification period might be

longer. *We recommend that people don't ask to sponsor a box, sponsoring a 'shelterbox solution' is much more flexible.*

Where can I track my ShelterBox?

You need to be careful in response to this. When someone makes a donation towards a ShelterBox they are provided with a box number. However, the system is not like a package delivery service. The donor cannot track the box as it leaves the warehouse and travels to its destination. Once a donor has received their box number (i.e. when their donation is processed) they can enter the number on the ShelterBox website "track your box page" <http://shelterboxusa.org/trackbox.php> and it will inform them 'Box to be deployed' or, once distributed, will state the destination country. However, it may be a number of months before the box is distributed and the destination is shown on the web site.

I looked on your website to see where my box has been deployed to and I see that they are still yet to be deployed. I am surprised that you do not "rotate" your stock. Is it just that mine has had loads of others stacked in front of it and it has yet to rise to the top of the pile to go out?

When supporters sponsor a ShelterBox, their box number gets added to the list of box numbers waiting to be deployed. Box numbers are then assigned to boxes or the equivalent value of aid (e.g. if just tents are sent instead of boxes, two tents might be assigned a box number instead of one box) as they are distributed to families during a disaster. During busy periods, such as during the Haiti earthquake when we sent around 28,000 boxes, we are sending out so many boxes that box numbers get assigned very quickly and therefore donors are waiting for only a matter of days or weeks to know where their box was sent. However, during relatively quiet periods the amount of box numbers we have outweighs the need for boxes deploying to the field and it therefore takes longer for a box to be deployed. We appreciate that as a donor this must be frustrating for you. But on the bright side, the fact that there's less demand means there aren't families desperately in need of emergency shelter. Also, having a supply of sponsored boxes on standby means that when a major disaster strikes, we have the materials and capacity available to respond as quickly as possible and to provide as much aid as is required. The nature of our work is, we never know when or where the next disaster will be but your support ensures our continued readiness.

Can a member of the public gradually sponsor one box over time, giving smaller contributions to the same box?

Quite often we have people sending in smaller donations to "add to their box" and we then have to explain that their smaller donations will go towards funding several boxes rather than one particular box as it would be unfeasible to have hundreds of partly funded boxes.

Can donations be given for a specific location?

ShelterBox is unable to accept time or location specific donations. The way we work means we have to be prepared for immediate response. Donations received before a disaster will often be those that are used to respond to it. Donations stimulated because of a disaster may be used to prepare for the next one.

How are the school boxes funded?

School boxes are funded in the same way that our green boxes are funded. All donations go into a big pot and are allocated to the aid we provide and the associated costs of delivery. There is a common misconception that school boxes are funded by Gift Aid. This is not the case.

Can supporters raise funds specifically for school boxes?

We do not fundraise separately for the school boxes. These are only sent out as part of an overall aid consignment and are paid for through general funds. This is because our main focus is on the emergency lifesaving humanitarian aid and we only send these boxes where we have heard a school or several schools have been destroyed.

What are funds used for if the demand for ShelterBoxes is low for a period of many months?

ShelterBox always has to be prepared for the next disaster. We never know when or where the next disaster will be. Funds received in advance of a disaster enable us to purchase stock and preposition it around the world, so that we are ready to respond quickly the next time a disaster occurs.

SHELTERBOX RESPONSE TEAMS

Do ShelterBox Response Team (SRT) members sleep in tents on deployment?

They can and do if required and are trained to be totally self-sufficient to ensure they are alleviating the problems being faced by a community and not adding to them. They also stay in hotels or at the homes of Rotarians, depending on the nature of the disaster and what accommodation is available.

How do I apply to become an SRT member?

Please visit the ShelterBox web site for details of how to become a SRT member. You apply online and if successful will be invited for an interview. Following the interview, you may be invited to the four day SRT assessment and training course. If you are selected to become a SRT member, you will then be invited to undertake a nine day training course.

REPRESENTING SHELTERBOX

How can I get involved in supporting ShelterBox?

ShelterBox couldn't function without the amazing support of thousands of people around the world. ShelterBox's supporters generously give their time and energy to help ShelterBox in all sorts of ways, from raising awareness, to generating funds, to providing practical and logistical support.

Raising awareness – give a talk or host an event, for example at a local community event, school, Rotary Club, or scouting event. Share your enthusiasm for ShelterBox and encourage others to become involved.

Raising funds – By organizing or taking part in an event that raises funds for ShelterBox you can make a direct difference to a family affected by a disaster. For ideas about fundraising see –

<http://www.shelterboxusa.org/involved.php> where there is a booklet of ideas that you can download.

Making a donation – If you want to donate directly to provide shelter, warmth and dignity to disaster survivors around the world you can make a donation online at www.shelterboxusa.org/donate.php or via an affiliate in your country.

We have a sign-up sheet for people interested in becoming a ShelterBox volunteer on the stall and we may hold a further information session this year if interest is there. Otherwise we will follow up personally with each individual.

What training is available for ShelterBox representatives?

Training for ShelterBox representatives takes a variety of forms. You might learn from other representatives or you might attend a formal event or training course. Different training courses are provided in different countries by the ShelterBox Affiliates. There are also a range of resources for speakers available on the resources page of the ShelterBox web site <http://shelterbox.org/resources.php>.

SHELTERBOX AFFILIATES

How many affiliates are there and what do they do?

There are around 20 ShelterBox Affiliates and you can check the flags on the international website to see if new affiliates join – www.shelterbox.org. Affiliates are independent organizations that share ShelterBox's mission of providing shelter, warmth and dignity to people affected by disasters worldwide. They support ShelterBox by carrying out awareness raising and fundraising activities in their country. They operate as a ShelterBox "family" or "network" around the world.

Do affiliates get involved in deployments?

ShelterBox International Operations team manages all deployments, even if there is an affiliate in the affected country. However, if a disaster occurs in an affiliate country, the affiliate might provide support in logistical issues, such as helping with drivers, stock storage and translations. ShelterBox Affiliates also help to identify and recruit ShelterBox Response Team members from their country.

SHELTERBOX PARTNERSHIPS

Which organizations have significant partnerships with ShelterBox?

Rotary:

ShelterBox is a Rotary International Project Partner. The global support from the Rotary network is the cornerstone that ShelterBox is built on. Rotary has been instrumental in our growth and Rotarians are the cement that binds us together. Since we were founded, we grew from one club's adopted project to the largest global Rotary club project in the 100-year history of the organisation.

In 2012, we became Rotary International's first project partner. This agreement enables both of us to collaborate more closely to bring relief and temporary shelter to survivors of disasters worldwide. The project partnership will build on both our strengths in responding to disasters all over the world.

The fundraising efforts by Rotarians make up a significant proportion of donations received by ShelterBox. Alongside this, Rotary Clubs provide invaluable logistical support to our field operations.

Scouts:

ShelterBox has a strong history of working with Scouts in disaster zones. Scouts have assisted us in setting up and maintaining camps for those who have lost everything in countries such as Kenya, Italy and Guatemala. From their assistance in the field to their engagement with the work we do, Scouts have become an integral part of the ShelterBox family. In the UK we are an official partner of the Scout Association, in the USA the Boy Scouts of America are becoming increasingly involved with the work we do, and throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific more and more Scouts are learning about ShelterBox. We have launched a series of innovative and inspiring activities for Scouts of all ages that aim to inform and challenge young people to learn more about international disaster relief. Contributions from Scout groups have significantly increased the number of people we can help.

If another organization or government body asks for ShelterBox assistance, do these organizations pay for ShelterBoxes or are they given to them at no charge?

ShelterBoxes are always a gift from the donor to the recipient. ShelterBox works in partnership with many other agencies who help us to distribute the aid where it is needed most but the ShelterBoxes remain the responsibility of ShelterBox and we have a duty of care to ensure that they are delivered to recipients. They cannot be purchased by another organization.