



A PROJECT PARTNERSHIP IN TRUE FORM

Rotary and ShelterBox Respond in Sri Lanka

In May 2016, when the most concentrated rainfall in 25 years drenched the island nation of Sri Lanka, ShelterBox was there. The international disaster relief organization arrived in-country to assist those who were forced to flee as landslides and mudslides swept away their homes, livestock and livelihoods.

The massive landslides and heavy flooding buried hundreds of homes in Sri Lanka causing many deaths, displacement and damage to property, ultimately affecting the lives of thousands of people. The Island nation went into mourning for the unprecedented number of victims, dead and displaced, in one of the worst natural disasters to hit Sri Lanka since the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of supporters around the world, ShelterBox was able to provide 126 families with ShelterBoxes packed full with a family tent, and all the supplies they needed to help them survive and recover. None of this would have been possible without the incredible support of Rotary International and the Rotary Club of Capital City in Sri Lanka.

Alex Youlten, the Rotary Partnership Manager at ShelterBox, said:

“If ever there was a shining example of the [Rotary International and ShelterBox] Project Partnership working for the good of the community, this is it”.

The strength of this success stems from a previous partnership between the Rotary Club of Capital City and ShelterBox in 2009. This was in response to the humanitarian crisis following the end of conflict in the country, when hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

In May, Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Capital City began assisting with the relief efforts as soon as the flooding occurred. From outsourcing boats to rescue people cut off by the floods, setting up medical treatment camps, organizing dry ration collection centres with other Rotary Clubs in the district, and general clean-up operations, the Capital City Club played an integral role in relief following the devastating landslides. All of this was accomplished while assisting the ShelterBox response to provide essential temporary shelter and supplies for families who were evacuated into temples and schools.

In addition, The Rotary Club of Capital City launched a project to provide education packs to students in schools in Aranayake. The Club packed and distributed education packs to 6,000 students in 54 schools. The project provided basic materials for education to help students recover from the trauma they had witnessed. The ShelterBox Response Teams were in Colombo and took the opportunity to help pack the school packs, further cementing the incredibly strong and effective bond between Rotary in Sri Lanka and ShelterBox teams—the project partnership in true form.

Logistically, the Rotary Club of Capital City assisted the ShelterBox Response Teams by helping to find accommodation, transportation, translation, and by liaising with the Ministry of Disaster Management, the local military and local authorities.

Rotarian Supem de Silva, who was ShelterBox's main in-country Rotary contact, has said:

“Our experience in 2009 and the respect we have for the way ShelterBox works, has helped us in many ways. We would like to think that we are more like ShelterBox now, and do whatever it takes to get the job done in the proper way in all our projects.”

When asked about the overall benefit of Rotary International working in partnership with ShelterBox, Supem de Silva responded,

“The local knowledge and contacts that Rotary has in the country will definitely help open doors and get things done for ShelterBox. For Rotary the positive image created by the ShelterBox donations will help elevate the social standing and acceptance of Rotary as a service organization. The synergies of working together will undoubtedly help both organizations to provide a more efficient and effective response in the aftermath of a disaster.”

Jaliya Bodinagoda, an Attorney at Law and another Rotarian who was instrumental in the response in Sri Lanka said,

“ShelterBox’s presence in Sri Lanka and providing assistance has greatly improved the relief effort. It is not only about merely putting up tents. The commitment and professional manner in which ShelterBox has gone about executing the task must be highlighted and commended. [...]”

“I would say, the ShelterBox and Rotary Club of Capital City, worked as one and even now continuing to work to implement the task, taking into consideration all factors into mind so that the people who will benefit by the ShelterBox, will be able to have a proper and safe temporary shelter until their homes are rebuilt in new locations [...] The professional manner in which all the team members of ShelterBox have worked, gives us the confidence that we will be able to implement the project, as it ought to be done, successfully [...] The partnership between ShelterBox and Rotary Club of Capital City, is built on trust and immense friendship, which I believe will stand in good stead in years to come.”

While the response in Sri Lanka is an excellent example of how Rotary and ShelterBox work together, ShelterBox works closely with Rotary Clubs around the world on most of our deployments. Rotarians and Clubs around the world also provide significant funding to make ShelterBox's work possible.

To all of the clubs, districts and individual Rotarians who help leave no family without shelter, thank you!