



ShelterBox Update *September 2020*

20 YEARS OF CHALLENGES: ShelterBox Adapts to Overcome

ShelterBox is not new to working in challenging situations. Flexibility and adaptation are inherent to the way we work with communities after disaster all over the world. Flexibility is important to ensure that communities receive the tools that they need to foster self-recovery. Adaptation fuels innovation as we monitor how aid is used and can be improved upon to better support those using it.

“We are flexible. We know that some of the families we help will be impatient to rebuild and strengthen their homes, while others don’t have the capacity or opportunity to start doing this straight away. Creating a home is a process that takes time and we support families to continue on that journey.”

- Dave Ray, ShelterBox Operations Coordinator

ShelterBox has dealt with many challenges since its beginning in 2000, but March 2020 introduced an unforeseen obstacle that would test our flexibility. Over the last six months, COVID-19 has added an extra hurdle to reaching vulnerable families in need of shelter after disaster. We have worked closely with partners during responses before, but now in the time of travel restrictions and community virus spread, partner organizations have become more important than ever. Completing distributions in The Philippines, Vanuatu, and Ethiopia over the last few months has not been easy, but we have adapted to overcome.

We firmly believe in the humanitarian mission to do no harm and we understand that with the nature of COVID-19’s spread, simply entering into vulnerable communities can bring harm to the families that we work with. Working with trusted partners on the ground, we at ShelterBox have been able to adapt our responses to address the needs of families and work within countries with stringent travel bans. We have also been working with our partners to ensure social distancing and other safety precautions are put in place while distributing aid. We have adapted some of the aid training that our Response Team Members would typically give on the ground into a digital format for situations where it makes sense and have found creative ways to spread important knowledge.

We have also been able to adapt what we provide to families in our responses. By including aid items such as washbasins and soap with our distributions, families that we support do not just receive a better chance to self-isolate in their shelter but can also improve their WASH and knowledge capabilities.

One of the challenges many local supporters and Rotarians at home have been facing was the issue of loneliness within their quarantine space. We thought up ways to connect Rotarians and supporters to one another and we decided to launch a North American book club. ShelterBox Book Club connects readers to our work through novels from countries we have deployed in as well as connecting readers with other like-minded people.

With Rotary’s Literacy month upon us, what better time to dive into a new book and travel the world from your

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ShelterBox and Rotary are official project partners in international disaster relief. ShelterBox is a registered charity independent of Rotary International and the Rotary Foundation



living room than with ShelterBox Book Club North America. Learn more or join here:
<https://www.shelterboxcanada.org/bookclub/>

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