ShelterBox Bob Doerr, ShelterBox Ambassador

Dear Rotarians,

This is a letter I just received from ShelterBox. As an Ambassador for ShelterBox, I am kept in the loop from a 10,000 foot level about current and ongoing events worldwide. As I judge that they are relevant and interesting to you I will share them. So, this is the latest.

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We are writing to provide the latest information regarding the Beirut explosions, as we know this has been a big news story and you as Ambassadors are receiving questions as to whether ShelterBox may respond.

The current situation in Beirut:

- 178 people were killed by the blasts, over 6,000 people injured, and at least 30 still missing.
- It is estimated that up to 300,000 people cannot currently live in their homes due to the blast – with many homes badly damaged. The vast majority have found shelter with family/friends in unaffected areas since this was a very geographically specific disaster, unlike a hurricane or flood.
- 70% of those displaced were renting and are already looking for alternative safe accommodation.
- The explosions affected many neighborhoods across Greater Beirut, including several with poor, migrant workers and refugee communities.
- Latest assessments report six major hospitals and 20 clinics sustained partial or heavy structural damage.
- The combination of political, economic, and coronavirus issues make coordination of the response challenging.

ShelterBox Response:

We are not currently providing aid to families in Beirut. However, the situation is still unclear, and we are working to understand the precise shelter needs and whether our type of aid would be suitable.

We have been in contact with our friends at Rotary District 2452, and have spoken directly to the president of the Rotary Club of Beirut Cedars who is supportive of our position.



Why we are not yet responding in Beirut:

It is unclear if our aid is needed. While the damage is extensive, many families are sheltering with relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Initial requests for shelter support focused on long-term building materials like windows, wood and steel. This is not typically the kind of aid that ShelterBox provides. Options like our family-sized tents are not likely to be the right solution in the dense urban setting of Beirut. However, there may be communities including refugees, that are more vulnerable and have fewer options for alternative shelter and this is the piece we are continuing to monitor.

If there is a role for ShelterBox, we are ready to respond.

We will continue to update the team as we know more.

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I hope this is informative and helps you understand some of the processes that ShelterBox goes through to ensure we are providing the best and most needed assistance to those in dire straights.

Sincerely,

Bob Doerr, ShelterBox Ambassador