

SEEKING STEALTH SHELTER: NOTES FOR 11 FEB FIELD TRIP

What is it? Host family and community support is an excellent means of assisting displaced populations because it is socially/culturally defined, part of a larger self-recovery process, something that is often established or emergent prior to the arrival of humanitarian actors, and a relatively cost-effective shelter intervention if supported. Until recently, most humanitarian agencies were unaware of the hosting dynamic because it often didn't generate a hard shelter need. Hence, "Stealth Shelter"!

Background. Recent experience suggests that far more disaster-affected households are hosted than meets the eye. It's not uncommon that 30 percent of affected populations are hosted by family and friends, with much higher percentages in places like Goma (75%; see handout) and over 90% in Pakistan last year. Here in Haiti, it appears that at least 33% of those affected are currently living in a hosting arrangement of some kind. Finally, it's also not uncommon that 15-20% of hosting arrangements become permanent shelter solutions for affected households.

Type of Hosting. There are two basic forms of hosting support: 1) Economic, typically in the form of some payment transaction, and typically among those in a landlord-renter relationship; and 2) Social, typically among family and friends, typically with no payment transaction. The former is market-oriented, and most often not sustainable over time, while the latter is rooted in social and familial obligation. Both can foster potential for abuse and protection-related issues, but experience indicates lower levels of such problems when hosting is socially-defined.

In addition to household-level relationships, hosting communities are often impacted by an influx of displaced households which consume water, populate schools and clinics, congest streets, etc. Past OFDA hosting programs have included community-level interventions of various kinds to "reduce the social and economic impacts of disasters" (OFDA's Third Phrase) associated with large influxes of displaced households.

Why Support Hosting? Having a lot of people on one's home can be a burden on the all concerned, of course, as housing space is constrained, privacy is encroached, more food, water, fuel, and other basic inputs are consumed at higher rates, etc. If not supported over time, the burdens become great, often resulting in hosted households being asked to leave. These households are thus displaced a second time, and often end up in camps or other difficult shelter situations, causing greater demands on humanitarian actors than might otherwise be the case.

Assistance Package. The chief form of assistance is provision of a notional package of inputs that might include some, all, or perhaps none of the following:

- Physical improvements or expansion of the hosting family shelter
- Provision of shelter kits or even transitional shelter
- Food and kitchen sets
- Fuel, blankets, sleeping sets, hygiene kits
- Cash vouchers for purchase of needs household items, and
- WASH improvements.

While in the Field. With the above in mind, then, some questions to ask in the field:

- About how many people were living in this community prior to the earthquake?
- About how many people are now living in the community who were not here before the earthquake?
- Where did the new arrivals come from?
- About how many of these people are from this community?
- How many who were originally from other communities?
- Where are they staying? How many with family and friends?
- How many with strangers, perhaps in a rental relationship?
- How many in spontaneous settlements ("camps")?
- If elsewhere, how many and in what type of arrangement?
- What kinds of assistance would be helpful if you had to stay here for 6-12 months (specify)?
- What would cause you to return to where you were living before the earthquake?
- Other questions??