

# USAID/OFDA Haiti Post-Earthquake Shelter and Settlements Sector Strategy

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**Overview:** Shelter and Settlements (S&S) sector assistance in the aftermath of the 12 January 2010 earthquake has emerged as a priority need, as evident below:

- Affected population: 3 million people (est.)
- Population in need of S&S sector assistance: 1.2-1.5 million people (est.)
- Number of households affected: 240,000-300,000 (est.), and
- Percentage of housing renting housing: 70 (est.), suggesting significant need for S&S sector interventions.

The impact of the earthquake on Haiti's economic, social, cultural, and political hub, Port-au-Prince, and environs, makes it all the more important to "think outside the tent" with regard to integrating humanitarian and development assistance in a rapid and effective manner. Further, the impacts of the earthquake are also national in scope, and humanitarian action will likely have national development implications, again suggesting a need to merge humanitarian action with development thinking and resources to accelerate recovery.

Humanitarian community approaches to S&S sector assistance in recent tsunami- and earthquake-affected regions of the world, which appear highly relevant to the current situation, have included preferences for:

- Plastic sheeting over tents, to permit flexible application of materials, enhanced protection from inclement weather, and adherence to minimally adequate humanitarian community guidelines
- Assistance on or near pre-event locations, where safe, over creation of camps, to reduce displacement and dislocation
- Earthquake resistant transitional shelter over pre-fabricated structures, to promote safer, more cost-effective shelter that generates beneficial economic impacts in disaster-affected economies, and
- Pre-reconstruction activities over the larger and longer-term reconstruction effort, to reduce the complexity of that effort for the Government of Haiti (GoH).

**Goal:** USAID/OFDA will provide adequate, habitable, safe, and secure shelter to the earthquake-affected population, in accordance with Sphere Project and USAID/OFDA humanitarian assistance guidelines. The S&S sector strategy will be implemented in collaboration with the GoH and the international community, most specifically the strategy adopted by the UN Emergency Shelter Cluster (ESC). The USAID/OFDA strategy features reliance on salvaged materials, self-help capacity, and social and economic networks, and informs recovery efforts with knowledge of practical earthquake resistant construction measures. The USAID/OFDA strategy will be linked to longer-

term shelter recovery programs, livelihood generation efforts, and efforts to promote disaster risk reduction (e.g., seismic, landslide, floods, fire, etc.)

**Duration:** USAID/OFDA-funded S&S sector assistance activities will commence immediately, and the bulk of those activities will be completed prior to the onset of hurricane season starting in June, or roughly four months, with some activities extending up to one year.

**Presence:** In coordination with other ESC actors and the GoH, USAID/OFDA intends to support S&S sector implementing partners in locations throughout the country where the earthquake-affected population is living, regardless of whether the location was directly affected by the earthquake. This will enable, for example support of host family and community assistance in regional cities and elsewhere.

**S&S Sector Interventions:** Based on initial assessments and preliminary information to date, USAID/OFDA proposes the following interventions:

- Assistance to Host Families and Communities
  - Preliminary information indicates over 200,000 people have received GOH support to travel from Port-au-Prince to regional cities and other outlying areas. Some are staying with host families, and some have moved into spontaneous settlements, perhaps as a sheltering solution while in transit to stay with family. Many people may require a range of needs, including shelter.
  - Host families and communities need assistance in sheltering affected family and friends. Assistance to host families/communities may include provision of plastic sheeting (to help expand or repair existing shelter structures), shelter repair or building materials, and provision of basic necessities for the migrants and host families alike (to prevent tension between displaced and host families). Past experience elsewhere indicates that successful hosting experiences tend to be those based on social relationships (e.g., direct or extended family, close friendships, etc.), rather than those based on economic relationships.
  
- Transitional Shelter Assistance
  - This intervention could include provision of plastic sheeting, shelter repair kits, and additional material, as appropriate, for displaced households in Port-au-Prince, earthquake-affected communities in outlying areas, and perhaps even as hosting support
  - Plastic sheeting is preferred over tents and pre-fabricated structures because of its flexibility, relatively low cost, familiarity among the affected population, and potential to create minimally adequate “covered living space.”
  - “Sheltering in place” should be considered, where possible on safe sites, instead of creating camps, to reduce displacement and safety/security concerns.
  - Safe, habitable, transitional shelter solutions can be created amidst, or near, damaged/destroyed structures on safe sites. This approach, commonly referred to

as “shelter-in-place” or “one warm room”, would allow people to stay in pre-event locations, if they desire and it is deemed safe, and would be a critical means of “jump-starting” the longer-term rebuilding process. In addition to provision of program funds, USAID/OFDA could consider delivery of shelter materials if shortfalls became apparent, either through local or international purchase, which can supplement salvaged materials to create suitable shelter.

- Transitional Settlements Assistance

- An estimated 500 spontaneous settlements have emerged nation-wide, 350 of which have been assessed by relief agencies. Based on preliminary assessments, an estimated 500,000 people are residing in the 350 sites and the projected total population for the 500 spontaneous settlements could exceed 700,000 people.
- Assistance may include provision of longer-term shelter (as opposed to emergency shelter) for the displaced, and provision of essential services, such as water, sanitation, electricity, and basic education to help normalize people’s lives.
- Creation of planned humanitarian settlements -- more than a camp, but less than a complete community -- on vacant and underutilized land in PAP and other communities, should be considered to provide shelter for families who have lost everything, in locations where rebuilding is not possible.

- Debris Removal, Salvaging, and Disposal

- Debris removal, salvaging, and disposal is a critical pre-cursor activity to provision of many S&S interventions, as it increases land supply available for sheltering activities, and can reduce safety and environmental concerns. This can be achieved, in part, through a range of Cash For Work (CFW) activities, and
- Salvaging usable building materials, where possible and safe, will provide the displaced population with additional shelter materials to complement materials such as plastic sheeting, metal roofing sheets, and tools.

- Disaster Risk Reduction Activities

- S&S sector interventions will incorporate earthquake-resistant design, training in earthquake-resistant construction methods, and public information campaigns in how to “Build Back Better” in areas prone to hazards (e.g., seismic, flood, wind, fire, etc.), featuring structural and non-structural risk reduction initiatives. This can be achieved through, for example, Cash For Training (CFT) efforts. Previous experience elsewhere indicates that earthquake-resistant construction can be safer and more cost-effective than many conventional sheltering interventions, and should be promoted as part of response activities in Haiti, and
- At the settlement level of analysis, and in addition to consideration of humanitarian new towns, other activities might include use of debt retirement mechanisms to promote DRR (e.g., Debt for Risk measures to manage land on steep slopes), and expanded use of alternative building materials and technologies

(e.g., bamboo, vetiver grass, PVC piping, ESB, etc.) to reduce current reliance on low-quality cement block, where cost-effective and appropriate.

**Challenges:** The challenges posed in responding to earthquake-generated S&S needs are many, including:

- Land supply in PAP and other settlements has been effectively reduced, as the earthquake has generated rubble fields of considerable size, which have rendered the land underneath unusable. The rubble fields need to be reduced and removed to facilitate S&S and all other sectoral activities. Debris clearance, then, needs to be a first-order priority. CFW activities will be necessary, but not sufficient, to address this priority, and will need to be supplemented with planned efforts to use heavy equipment to accelerate clearance of land to increase supply for recovery and reconstruction
- Identifying available land, particularly relatively hazard-free (i.e., “safe”) land, that can be used for both humanitarian and development assistance purposes, is a critical issue. Legal and urban planning issues will need to be identified and addressed to begin the process of reducing disaster risk in Port-au-Prince, thus contributing to reducing the number of people located in hazard-prone areas
- The need to bridge the wide gulf between the humanitarian assistance and development assistance communities that typically exists in post-disaster shelter responses, with the result being the prevalence of spontaneous reconstruction. In this regard, USAID/OFDA will work with the USAID/Haiti Mission on how best to facilitate the transition from response to reconstruction, and
- There is a critical need for information on the pre-earthquake housing and land market structure: numbers, rental/owner shares, informal/formal shares, etc., estimates of likely earthquake impacts, map and data inventories of vacant and underutilized land, land tenure status, etc. It is possible that rental share of the housing market was considerable pre-event, perhaps as great as 70 percent, suggesting the need for provision of longer-term shelter to renters, perhaps in new locations.

**Additional S&S Sector Issues:**

- USAID/OFDA-supported S&S sector implementing partners (IPs) will be expected to participate in ESC coordination meetings, work closely with the GoH, other IPs, and other agencies in the field to coordinate activities and jointly address outstanding needs, provide technical guidance to inform cluster-wide activities, and convey project activity reports in a timely manner
- IPs will be expected to use Sphere Project and USAID/OFDA guidelines to inform S&S activities

- S&S sector interventions should be based primarily on building materials that can be salvaged in a safe manner for re-use in repair and reconstruction activities, as well as materials purchased locally, to the extent possible, and
- USAID/OFDA welcomes the use of private donation funds and in-kind contributions to supplement funded activities, where appropriate. However, IPs must document clearly how any private donation funds or in-kind contributions will be used to expand or up-grade funded activities. The need to link non-program funds and contributions to funded activities was a major “lesson learned” of the 2004 tsunami in Asia, and will be applied in the post-earthquake effort in Haiti.

For further information regarding program details and deadlines for submitting concept papers, please contact:

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