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### **SHELTERBOX LIVES UP TO RAPID RESPONSE REPUTATION IN MYANMAR**

The young but determined emergency aid organization ShelterBox scored a major global relief accomplishment by gaining the first UK-based relief team access to the cyclone-stricken nation of Myanmar.

The initial ShelterBox Response Team (SRT) unit, comprised of four British volunteers, touched down in Yangon with the first of multiple shipments of their portable relief Boxes on Thursday night, May 8<sup>th</sup> with the permission of Myanmar government officials. The team confirmed that they were the first UK-based charity admitted, if not the first overall. Distribution of the Boxes began immediately on Friday in the Yangon area. Additional shipments in transit are expected Saturday, and will be directed to more out-lying areas of devastation.

The highly-regarded direct and rapid response reputation of the grassroots UK organization and its relatively low international profile proved appealing to the besieged Myanmar Embassy. ShelterBox contacted the Embassy shortly after the cyclone hit through relief coordinator Leilei Thein, a US citizen from San Diego who was born in Myanmar and is the daughter-in-law of General Aung San. The General, now deceased, was one of the leaders of the 1962 military coup and is regarded the father of modern Myanmar, providing his surviving relatives with a degree of social influence in the country.

ShelterBox is a non-political volunteer organization loosely affiliated with the world-wide service organization Rotary International. The unassuming aid group is often able to utilize the international network of local Rotary clubs to bypass red-tape that can hinder effective emergency response. To date, ShelterBox has distributed its unique aid package to 65 disaster events in 47 countries since 2001, including over 13,000 units for the Christmas tsunami of 2004.

Each aid Box contains a 10-person tent, sleeping mats and mosquito netting, a stove and cooking implements, emergency water purification supplies, and hand tools. The Box and contents become the property of the recipients. Additional Boxes for Myanmar are currently being assembled by community volunteers in the organization's Operations Centre in Cornwall, UK. The quantities available for Myanmar relief depend on incoming donations to sponsor the Boxes. A chartered flight of 1000 ShelterBoxes is expected to arrive next week with a second relief team. Box sponsors are individuals, Rotary clubs, and community, church and school groups in the six countries that ShelterBox currently has national affiliates established, including UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Germany. A complete ShelterBox costs \$1,000 to sponsor, but financial contributions of any amount are welcome.

US donations may be directed to ShelterBox USA, 8374 Market St. #203, Bradenton FL 34202 or on-line @ [www.shelterboxusa.org](http://www.shelterboxusa.org).

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