

Key messages for the Shelter Cluster – six months commemoration

- During the first six months of the response to Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), enormous progress has been made to address the immediate shelter needs of the affected population. To enable the survivors to improve their housing situation in the long term, significant additional efforts are needed: Shelter Cluster partners and the government need to provide more building materials of adequate quality, additional trainings that teach how to build back better and clarity on the government’s relocation strategy.
- Typhoon Haiyan severely damaged or destroyed more than 1 million homes. So far Shelter Cluster partners have provided close to 3 million people (570,000 households) with emergency shelter assistance such as tents and tarpaulins. 650,000 people (130,000 households) have received tools, cash, building and roofing materials that enable them to repair their own homes. In addition Shelter Cluster partners trained 2,500 carpenters in “building back safer” techniques which will have a lasting, positive effect on the safety of houses in the affected area.
- Despite these achievements, the Shelter Cluster is very concerned by the imminent start of this year’s Typhoon season and the deadly threat it poses to the population: while the vast majority of repaired or newly constructed homes can keep a family dry, most of these houses and shelters will not be able to withstand a storm. To make things worse, in some areas 90 per cent of all evacuation centres are still unusable because of the damage they suffered from Typhoon Haiyan. This means that people will have no safe place to go to when the next storm comes and the Philippines are on average hit by 20 significant storms each year.
- 90 per cent of all families have started to repair or rebuild their homes. Of these, more than a third say that they can complete construction without additional assistance, which shows the resilience and resolve of the affected population. However it also means that more than half still need our help to get back on their feet. The 10 per cent of survivors who have not started repairs or construction are of particular concern to the humanitarian community since these are people with little or no assets and no place to return to.
- Up to 200,000 families potentially face relocation from areas deemed unsafe due to the risk of storms and floods. However, the continuing policy gaps related to the proposed “no dwelling zones” is deeply distressing to the affected survivors. These issues need to be resolved quickly. The Shelter Cluster emphasizes that relocation should only be the last resort and needs to be based on informed consent. Alternative means to reduce risks need to be considered and proposed to the affected communities.