

UPDATE ON TENTS AND SHEETING, AND RATIONALE FOR PREFERENCE OF SHEETING OVER TENTS

Figures on tents in the IOM pipeline are low because aid organizations are not reporting distribution activity. Actual totals likely exceed a minimum of 35,000 tents in-country, with another 85,000 in the near-term pipeline.

In addition, AND THIS IS EXCEEDINGLY IMPORTANT, a minimum of 140,000 pieces of plastic sheeting (tarpaulins, typically 4m x 6m) is in-country, or arriving soon. In addition, USAID/OFDA and other agencies have additional, significant quantities of sheeting that will likely more than address identified needs. The sheeting, when combined with rope or some other framing material as part of a kit, has some of the following attributes that make it a preferred shelter option over tents:

- Larger living space, which can conform to recognized international humanitarian community guidelines. Most tents provided by donors and others are typically too small to support minimum shelter guidelines for families exceeding four people
- More flexible applications to social and site conditions. Tents have a rigid footprint, while plastic sheeting and related material can be formed into innumerable designs and shapes
- Input to recovery, as sheeting is often the basis for subsequent shelter interventions that can lead to permanent shelter solutions. Tents rarely, if ever, have such impacts
- Positive economic impacts, as the material to support sheeting is often purchased locally, thereby circulating funds into disaster-affected economies. Tents are typically imported, and rarely generate local economic impacts, and
- Lower cost, typically, than tents, permitting sheltering of more people with the same resources.

The GoH call for more tents is not uncommon, and we see it in numerous post-disaster settings. This call is typically rooted in previous experience, as aid agencies have provided tents in the past, and little else, so leaders have little basis for asking for anything but tents.

This is even the case with humanitarian agencies at times, where staff unfamiliar with non-tent solutions mirror host country government requests, rather than speak with their own shelter experts, who typically know the experience with plastic sheeting and related materials outlined above.