

# THE JTI FOUNDATION NEWS



GEA (blue) REDOG (orange) and the ShelterBox team (top right corner)

## Teaming up to save lives

It is two years since the JTI Foundation brought together partners ShelterBox, GEA, REDOG and Peace Winds Japan at a workshop in Istanbul. The meeting took as its starting point the consensus that in emergency situations, every second counts – and that coordination and cooperation between disaster relief organizations is vital to responding effectively. More details of what was achieved at Istanbul are available in the [second quarter Newsletter of 2013](#).

Since then, the JTI Foundation has continuously supported its partners' efforts to work together in preparation for joint deployments in the event of future disasters.

In this article, representatives from GEA, REDOG and ShelterBox explain how their complementary knowledge and skills will make them stronger when they work together, and outline some of the concrete steps they have taken to deepen their collaboration.

We also spent more time with ShelterBox, recalling their recent disaster relief interventions in Malawi and Malaysia.

# Partnering, for a stronger response to disasters

In February this year, GEA, REDOG and ShelterBox met in Ankara, at the GEA training site with a joint practice and collaborative drills. After the event, we caught up with Cem Behar and Betül Ergün from GEA, Romaine Kuonen and Linda Hornisberger, from REDOG as well as James Luxton from ShelterBox.

**THE LAST TIME WE SPOKE, YOU HAD JUST FINALIZED A PROTOCOL FOR DEPLOYMENT WITH SWISS DISASTER DOG ASSOCIATION REDOG. NOW YOU'RE PLANNING SOMETHING SIMILAR WITH SHELTERBOX. HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN IN THE PIPELINE?**

*Cem Behar, GEA:* We've had several ideas in mind since the Foundation organized the Istanbul Disaster Relief Workshop in 2013. We wanted to focus on our main competence of Search & Rescue, and started working on the details with REDOG almost immediately. Once we completed the first phase and saw perfect results,

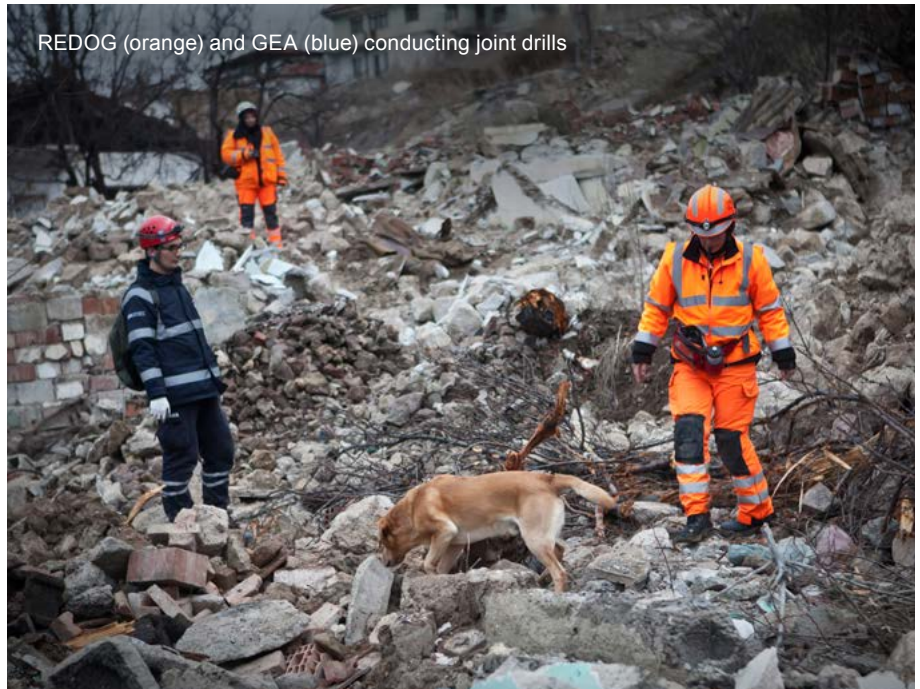
we started exchanging ideas with ShelterBox at the start of this year.



The GEA search and rescue team



James Luxton and the GEA search and rescue team



REDOG (orange) and GEA (blue) conducting joint drills

**WHAT HAVE BEEN THE RESULTS SO FAR OF THE JOINT GEA-REDOG PROTOCOL?**

*Romaine Kuonen, President REDOG:* GEA participated in REDOG training last December, and we in turn visited them in February. Every meeting has reinforced how much our organizations have in common. GEA has a broad range of Search & Rescue skills, and our expertise in dog handling complements these. For example, REDOG has established and trained a new unit dedicated to joint missions with GEA. We also have doctors, paramedics and logistical capabilities, so we can support GEA in a number of scenarios. We've been delighted by how easy it has been to work together, and there's a growing friendship, which is very important for us.

**GEA IS A SEARCH & RESCUE SPECIALIST, WHILE SHELTERBOX IS AN EMERGENCY SHELTER CHARITY: WHERE DO THE SYNERGIES LIE?**

*James Luxton, ShelterBox:* In fact, GEA and ShelterBox operate using a similar model. We are rapid response organizations who deploy highly trained volunteers to respond to natural disasters. Together, we have 25 years of experience responding to emergency situations, and have developed extensive contact networks in countries across the world. By sharing our contacts and knowledge in real time, we will be able to hit the ground running after a disaster.

*Betül Ergün, GEA:* While we are foremost an international Search & Rescue team, we increasingly have

a complete deployment strategy. Upon completion of the rescue phase, our volunteers often remain on the ground to provide humanitarian aid including tents, food, water and medicine. We're planning to work with ShelterBox to enhance our capabilities in this second phase.

**WE HAVE A SWISS, A BRITISH AND A TURKISH ORGANIZATION – ISN'T COMMUNICATION A BIT OF AN ISSUE?**

*Linda Hornisberger, Chief of education at REDOG's Search Team:* We pretty much all speak English. And more important, we share the same ideals, we have the same motivation, and this is stronger than any barriers of language or culture.

*Cem Behar, GEA:* I agree – as humanitarian world actors, we all speak the same language when it comes to doing good for all people in need.

**YOU ARE AWAITING YOUR FIRST JOINT DEPLOYMENT: IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE ALL THREE ORGANIZATIONS INTERVENING TOGETHER?**

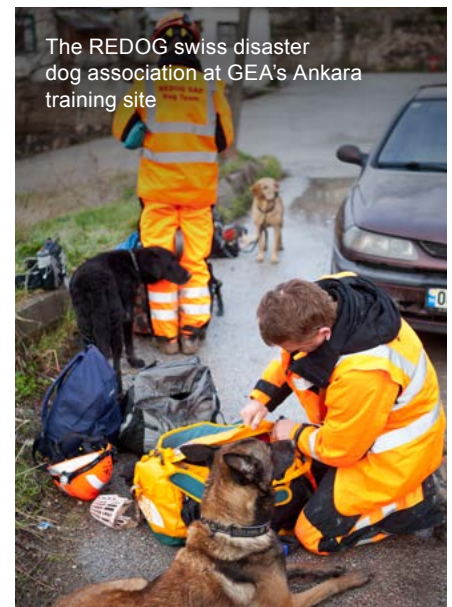
*James Luxton, ShelterBox:* I think most likely after a large-scale earthquake or tsunami. REDOG and GEA would be first in, and straight into the search and rescue phase. ShelterBox would be gathering information and maintaining contact with GEA and REDOG – and receiving on the ground reports. ShelterBox will then arrive to carry out needs assessments and begin distributing emergency shelter. This will be guided by the reports and

contacts provided by GEA and REDOG. Potentially, GEA's humanitarian teams would also support distribution.

**OTHER THAN DRILLS, DO YOU KEEP EACH OTHER INFORMED ON A PERIODIC BASIS?**

*James Luxton, ShelterBox:* Part of our new agreement covers this. ShelterBox will keep GEA up to date with where we are deploying – we deploy most often – and we'll also attend each other's training courses where appropriate.

*Romaine Kuonen:* REDOG is in regular contact with GEA, and we will continue to meet up to exchange ideas and train together. Sharing knowhow and staying in regular contact is vital to maximizing our joint effectiveness in the event of future disasters.



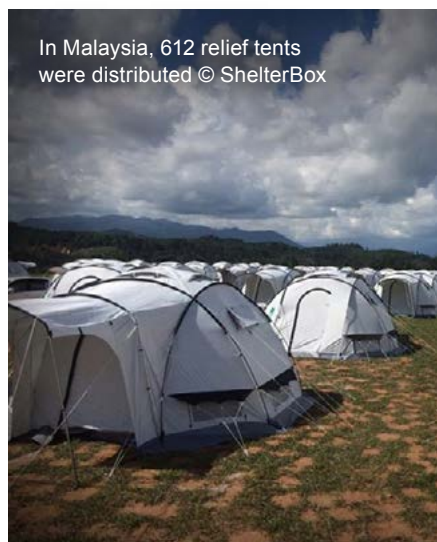
The REDOG swiss disaster dog association at GEA's Ankara training site

# The right response: thinking outside the box



In Malawi, the JTI Foundation supported the distribution of 224 ShelterBoxes © ShelterBox

The JTI Foundation has partnered with ShelterBox since 2012 – assisting with both organizational capacity building, and a number of specific disaster response initiatives. Most recently, we supported ShelterBox programs in Malaysia and Malawi, where separate incidents of severe flooding left thousands of families homeless. Here, we catch up with James Luxton from ShelterBox, who outlines some of the similarities and differences between the two interventions.



In Malaysia, 612 relief tents were distributed © ShelterBox

## **TWO EMERGENCY RELIEF DEPLOYMENTS ON TWO DIFFERENT CONTINENTS, LESS THAN TWO MONTHS APART: IS THIS USUAL FOR YOU?**

*James Luxton, ShelterBox:* In fact, this is quite normal for ShelterBox. In 2014 we deployed 23 times – an average of almost two emergency relief deployments a month.

## **ARE NATURAL DISASTERS OCCURRING MORE OFTEN THAN IN THE PAST?**

*James Luxton:* I think there are two factors at work here. First, extreme weather events are definitely increasing and will continue to as climate change accelerates. Second, a larger number of media channels leads to increasing public awareness of natural disasters and displacement caused by conflicts.

## **HOW DO YOU ENSURE READINESS TO DEPLOY, AND HOW DO YOU CHOOSE COUNTRIES IN WHICH TO INTERVENE?**

*James Luxton:* Thanks to our 180 ShelterBox Response Team volunteers positioned around the world, we're able to deploy a team to almost anywhere quickly and effectively after disaster

strikes. We aim to respond wherever and whenever there are beneficiaries in need.

## **IN MALAYSIA YOU SUPPORTED THE LOCAL POPULATION WITH TENTS, WHEREAS IN MALAWI YOU SHIPPED YOUR UNIQUE SHELTERBOXES THAT IN ADDITION TO TENTS, INCLUDE NON-FOOD ITEMS. WHAT EXPLAINS THAT?**

*James Luxton:* People's needs differ in every disaster situation, and it's our job to identify that need and respond with the right type of assistance. After the flooding in Malaysia, our needs assessments indicated the right thing was to provide tents. Most of these were set up near people's homes, providing them with shelter while they rebuilt their homes. In Malawi the flooding was so catastrophic that many people were forced far away from their homes. In this situation, the complete ShelterBox was the right option, providing those who lost everything with shelter, warmth and dignity.

ShelterBox tents are filled with non-food items such as mosquito nets and sleeping mats © ShelterBox



**ONCE THE EMERGENCY ITEMS ARE SHIPPED, WHO DECIDES WHERE THEY WILL BE INSTALLED? AND HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE BENEFICIARIES?**

*James Luxton:* Whenever it is safe to do so, we provide emergency shelter as close to families' home-sites as possible. This facilitates and encourages recovery. When that's not possible, we provide shelter in camps, ensuring that water, hygiene and security standards are met. A rigorous beneficiary selection process ensures that we prioritize the most vulnerable – including pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, those with disabilities and the elderly.

**WHAT HAPPENS ONCE THE EMERGENCY PHASE IS OVER? IS YOUR WORK DONE, OR DO YOU ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO RETURN TO PERMANENT HOUSING?**

*James Luxton:* The emergency phase is first stage of recovery for those affected by disaster. This means the aid that ShelterBox provides is the first step towards people returning to permanent housing. I gave the earlier example of providing tents in Malaysia at disaster sites. This proximity makes a significant positive improvement to recovery rates. In contrast, in Malawi the displacement and destruction was more extensive. Here ShelterBoxes provide people with a full range of essentials, and is theirs to keep. When waters recede, families can pack up the ShelterBox take it back to their home-sites – and continue to use the contents while they rebuild their lives. So in short, 'yes' – we very much encourage beneficiaries to return to permanent homes, and as quickly as is possible.

**[WWW.JTIFFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.JTIFFOUNDATION.ORG)**

In Malaysia, heavy floods swept away housing © ShelterBox



ShelterBox Malaysia response © ShelterBox



Once distributed, Shelterboxes are owned by the beneficiaries © ShelterBox

