

# Caring for Your Transitional Shelter

Essential  
advice for  
maintaining  
your T-shelter

CRS



Catholic Relief Services  
#1, Delmas 81  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Illustrator: Michel Junior Charles  
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## **BACKGROUND**

In response to the 2010 earthquake, CRS Haiti has been implementing the *Retounen nan Vwazinaj* program in six communities.

### **What is the transitional shelter program?**

The CRS T-shelter program aims to support families as they move from tent structures to transitional wooden shelters. T-shelters provide safer, more comfortable and more durable places to live while families rebuild their homes or find new places to rent.

CRS is targeting individuals and families that currently do not have other housing options but who own or have access to land upon which a T-shelter can be built.

### **How long will my T-shelter last?**

CRS would like to provide T-shelters to as many people as possible. Therefore, producing the shelters quickly and inexpensively is important to the program. This means that your T-shelter will not be perfect. Doors and windows may not fit perfectly, and rain may enter through the seams in the plywood walls.

CRS estimates that the shelters will last several years. However, the life span of your T-shelter will depend on how you take care of it.

*It is your responsibility to maintain your T-shelter. This booklet contains ideas about how you can do this.*

### **If I look after my T-shelter, can I live in it permanently?**

No. The T-shelters were not designed to last forever. It is important to start planning now to build a permanent house.

## WARNING!

CRS T-shelters **cannot** withstand strong hurricanes, landslides or other extreme forces. CRS strongly recommends that you should evacuate your T-shelter during these situations.

During hurricanes, you should follow the Department of Civil Protection's instructions for evacuation.



If your shelter is on a slope, please be aware that when the soil becomes saturated with water, the earth may become unstable. Rocks and mud may slide into your shelter, and the ground beneath your shelter may slide downhill.

If you live on or near a slope, inspect the land beneath and around your T-shelter frequently. During heavy rains, it may be safer to evacuate the shelter.



## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR T-SHELTER

There are three primary enemies of your shelter:



Rain and water



Wind



Insects (such as termites)



### Protect your T-shelter against rain and water

CRS has provided paint for your T-shelter's wood. In addition, you may choose to do the following:

- Caulk the seams between the plywood and rub caulk on the edges of the panels.
- Give the plywood an extra coat of paint to better repel water.



structures while families rebuild their homes or find different homes to rent. CRS' transitional shelters, while they can last a long time, are not meant to be permanent houses.

### Is it true that if I receive a T-shelter I cannot get a visa to the U.S.?

No, this is not true. There is no connection between receiving a T-shelter from CRS and applying for visas to other countries.

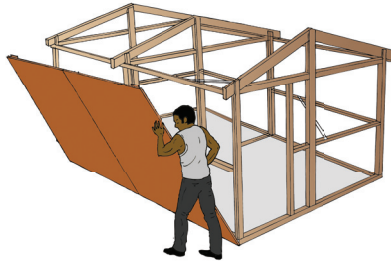
### MORE INFORMATION

Speak to a CRS staff member in your area. If you experience an issue with CRS services, call telephone number 277 for assistance.

- Remove the metal roofing and the wood crosspieces (also called *purlins*) by carefully prying with a hammer or metal bar.



- Then try to remove the side panels (not the front or back panels) from the shelter by carefully prying them off the building. This should leave just three frames, which you can try to save or continue to take apart.



## OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who is CRS?

Catholic Relief Services is a Catholic nongovernmental organization founded to assist poor and disadvantaged communities around the world regardless of race, nationality or creed. CRS started working in Haiti in 1954.

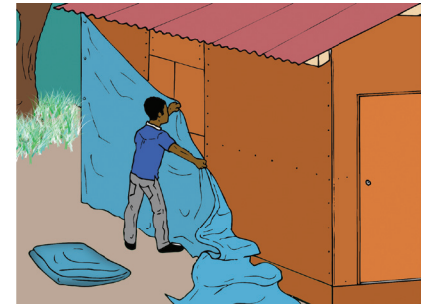
### Where does funding for CRS programs in Haiti come from?

The funding that allows CRS to implement programs in Haiti comes from a number of sources, including the United States government, foundations, Catholic partner organizations, United Nations agencies and private individuals.

### Why did CRS Haiti build temporary shelters?

CRS knows that a transitional shelter is not a permanent solution for a family that lost its house during the earthquake. CRS decided nevertheless to offer transitional shelters so that people could move out of camps and into safer, more comfortable and more durable

- Cover the plywood with plastic or a tarp, or add concrete blocks or a layer of stucco to the exterior.



CRS has already provided concrete to make the floor waterproof. You may choose to add extra concrete and repair the floor if the concrete becomes worn.

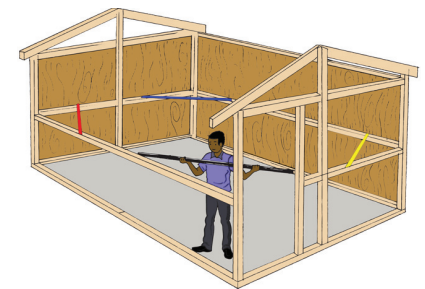


### Protect your T-shelter against wind

CRS built braces in the roof to strengthen the shelter against wind. However, if a strong hurricane is approaching, evacuation of the shelter is recommended. You should follow the Department of Civil Protection's instructions for evacuation.

To protect your T-shelter against wind, you may choose to do the following:

- Add additional bracing to help hold up the walls during strong winds. This bracing may be the difference between your shelter remaining intact or becoming heavily damaged.
- Add extra rebar and concrete. The extra weight of the concrete helps to hold the building down when the wind tries to lift it.



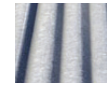


## Protect your T-shelter against insects

Much of the wood in your T-shelter has already been treated with insecticide in the factory. This is why the wood has a greenish color. You may choose to brush a solution of insecticide and water on the untreated wood to help keep termites and other insects away.



Making changes to the walls and posts (by cutting out extra windows or extending the shelter) may reduce the strength of your T-shelter. Seek advice from a trained carpenter before making changes to your T-shelter.



If you make holes in the roof, they should be plugged with roof sealant.

## OTHER IMPORTANT ADVICE



Please note that you should keep fire away from your shelter. Cooking inside the structure can cause harmful fumes or even burn down your shelter.



You may need to add a few nails to loose boards or fix a door or window occasionally.



Electricity is potentially lethal. Electrical wires must be installed properly and kept away from the metal roof.

Never leave bare copper wire exposed. Always tape over bare wire to prevent sparks that could cause a fire.

## MOVING YOUR T-SHELTER

The T-shelter belongs to the family that is named as the beneficiary in form RV05, “Accord CRS—Bénéficiaire de l’Abri Transitionnel.” In some circumstances, families may want to move to a new location or reuse the materials when the T-shelter is no longer needed. Disassembling your T-shelter may damage the materials, but here are a few steps that you should follow if you decide to dismantle the shelter:

- Carefully start at the top of the building, removing the metal roofing first.



- Whenever you can, hit the pointy end of the nail with your hammer so that the other end, the head, is pushed out of the wood. Then pull out the nail by its head.

