

DISASTER GIVING ADVICE

Following a severe natural disaster or crisis, donors want to respond to communities in devastation. During this time, international humanitarian relief agencies tend to focus on immediate relief, however, the long term recovery for these communities is just as important. This factsheet outlines information on disaster giving and provides advice for donors thinking of donating to disaster appeals.

(Source: Centre for Disaster Philanthropy; Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters)

INTRODUCTION

After every disaster, a considerable number of Australian Communities Foundation (ACF) sub-funds give to a variety of international aid organisations. However, everyone has the same questions when it comes to disaster giving:

- There are so many organisations working in this field, which organisation should I donate to?
- Where will my donation have the biggest impact?
- How do I make sure it will reach the community in need?

Many donors feel a sense of urgency or a need to commit funds straight away, however, experience tells us to take a more nuanced approach.

DATA ON DISASTERS

The Center for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) focuses on humanitarian and emergency situations with major impacts on human health. This includes all types of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, windstorms, famines and droughts; and man-made disasters creating mass displacement of people from civil strife and conflicts.

CRED does extensive research and one of their core data products is the EM-DAT disaster database located at: www.emdat.be. The main objective of the database is to serve the purposes of humanitarian action at national and international levels. The

database contains essential core data on the occurrence and effects of over 18,000 mass disasters in the world from 1900 to present.

Communication about disasters often takes two extremes. News crews report about dramatic impact, however, it's only when television crews have packed up, that actual statistics and the extent of devastation become known. It's these statistics that need to be considered before giving, as they tell the true story of what's needed.

The Centre for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) has a collection of useful infographics on their website. These are a useful resource for visualising the extremes of disasters.

See: www.disasterphilanthropy.org

If you are interested in more information and research about philanthropy and disaster giving, *Issuelab* has a collection of research on their website. See www.issuelab.org.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

Not too long ago, the Foundation Center and Centre for Disaster Philanthropy published "*Measuring the State of Disaster Philanthropy 2014: Data to Drive Decisions*". Although it's about funding disasters by US foundations, it gives some interesting general insights about disaster giving, such as:

- "Giving is often influenced by media coverage, which tends to focus on acute and telegenic



disasters. Complex humanitarian emergencies, famines, and other disasters that are considered “slow-onset” tend to receive less media attention and less funding.

- Lessons learned from past disasters highlight the need for funding beyond immediate relief. Building community resiliency and preparedness can contribute substantially to mitigating the impact of disasters. In addition, long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts are crucial, particularly after media attention and relief funding have dwindled."

The CDP advises the following steps for those who want to make a difference, in the event of a disaster:

1. **Watch.** The disaster occurs on date X. Before considering a funding option, wait two weeks. Maybe even four. Use that time for the magnitude of the disaster to truly unfold. It won't be long before a more complete picture emerges of lives lost, infrastructure damaged, individuals affected, and unmet immediate response needs to be determined.
2. **Learn.** Take that time to understand how the needs associated with this disaster are unfolding by reading media accounts of the disaster, responding agency reports, UN and USAID updates about the devastation, and the CDP website.
3. **Act.** After two weeks, the media's attention will sadly have turned away from the place where the disaster has occurred. Simultaneously, the local and international non-government organisation community efforts will be in full swing to support the longer term needs of those affected. Now is the time for a funder to wisely choose to support medium- and long-term recovery efforts.

Beside these three simple steps, some additional tips for disaster giving are:

- Try to give to organisations that will be in the area in the long term, preferably local organisations through a partnership approach with an international aid agency.
- Connect with other donors to create greater impact.
- Look to past disasters for guidance and lessons learned.
- Support the sharing of best practice.

FURTHER INFORMATION

When considering disaster giving the following resources may be useful:

- Center for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) is a Belgium based organisation that has been active for over 30 years in the fields of international disaster and conflict health studies, with research and training activities linking relief, rehabilitation and development. Visit: www.cred.be
- CRED's EM-DAT disaster database: www.emdat.be
- The CDP is a US based organisation aiming to transform disaster giving by providing timely and thoughtful strategies to increase donors' impact during domestic and international disasters. Visit: www.disasterphilanthropy.org
- The Foundation Centre is a US based source for information about philanthropy worldwide. Visit: www.foundationcenter.org
- Issuelab is a service of the Foundation Centre, and works to more effectively gather, index, and share the collective intelligence of the social sector. They provide free access to thousands of case studies, evaluations, white papers, and issue briefs addressing some of the world's most pressing social problems. Visit: www.issuelab.org