

Myths and Facts about International Disaster Donations

MYTH	FACT
<i>It is best to collect goods to help victims of international disasters.</i>	Financial donations are the best way to help international disaster victims. With a cash contribution, relief organizations can purchase exactly what is most urgently needed by victims -- without incurring any transportation costs. Cash also enables relief supplies to be purchased near the disaster site which helps to stimulate the local economy trying to recover.
<i>If I donate cash, most of it will go to administrative costs and my money will not help the victims.</i>	There are numerous reputable international disaster response agencies who dedicate monetary contributions directly to relief professionals working in the field with disaster victims. It is important that contributors feel comfortable with their charity of choice and research their methods as appropriate. Cash donations have far greater impact than donated goods.
<i>I can not donate enough money to make a difference.</i>	Even a small donation can help international disaster victims. In India, \$50 buys a fishing net for a fisherman recovering from the tsunami. In Java, \$50 provides a one-month food supply to volunteers rebuilding homes for earthquake victims. In Zimbabwe, a \$10 donation can provide regular healthcare to 90 people for a year. <small>(Source: www.globalgiving.org)</small>
<i>Donating cash does not allow my family or community to feel personally involved.</i>	Cash gifts can come from fundraising activities which help individuals and communities feel more involved. This can be as simple as hosting a lemonade stand or as detailed as organizing a 5K city run.
<i>Even if I donate cash, I should still send used clothes and canned goods.</i>	Shipping goods from the U.S. to a disaster area is often nearly impossible. The items you donate may never get to the disaster victims, or it may get there too late to be of help. Difficulties in shipping, storing and delivering goods can actually interfere with professional relief efforts. For example, after the Asian tsunami a mountain of clothing was sent to survivors in southern India. Many families refused to accept them. The unwanted clothes were dumped on roadsides and municipal workers had to be diverted from the relief effort to gather them up. They also proved a hazard to local livestock, which tried to eat them. In addition to clothing, donated food was sent. However, it included culturally inappropriate food that became a health hazard when it was dumped. Cash donations prevent culturally, dietary, and environmentally inappropriate giving. In sum, cash is always best.
<i>Disasters rarely occur and are only catastrophic events.</i>	International disasters occur frequently and are identified in many forms. Disasters not only include natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis or floods, but AIDS, famine, wide-spread disease, and war are also considered disasters. A disaster is best identified as any situation that occurs suddenly and causes great loss of life, damage, or hardship. <small>(Source: www.dictionary.com)</small>