



# GUIDE TO HUMANITARIAN GIVING

August 2010

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In the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian emergency, the public sector and the private sector frequently respond with cash contributions and in-kind donations. This guide outlines how to ensure those contributions and donations are relevant, timely and effective.

**This guide covers the following:**

- CASH DONATIONS
- IN-KIND DONATIONS OF RELIEF GOODS
- IN-KIND DONATIONS OF SERVICES & VOLUNTEERS
- ENGAGING IN UN/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS
- REPORTING YOUR CASH AND IN-KIND DONATIONS

*NOTE: The United Nations and other humanitarian relief providers welcome all forms of assistance. However, potential donors are urged to make cash contributions rather than in-kind donations. A cash donation to an organization or project within a funding framework ensures that your donation feeds into the humanitarian community's strategic plan, which has been prepared in coordination with the affected country. In this way, the type of relief provided to populations will fully reflect priority needs throughout an emergency response.*

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## CASH DONATIONS

To donate cash through the United Nations, please consider the following options.

### **Give to activities/projects in consolidated appeals or flash appeals**

For donors who wish to earmark funds to a specific project and/or relief organization, the best option is to give to the activities or projects specified in humanitarian consolidated and/or flash appeals. These appeals are the best catalogue of humanitarian needs. They are coordinated, strategic humanitarian plans developed by major organizations working on the ground in an emergency, in coordination with the affected country's Government. Funding for projects listed in the appeals goes directly to the appealing organizations. For details of how to make cash donations, please check the individual websites of humanitarian relief providers. For more information on the humanitarian appeals process, please visit our website: <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/>

### **Give to the Emergency Response Fund**

The Emergency Response Fund (ERF) is the best option for donors who have no preferred project or relief organization, and who want funds to be allocated according to priority needs in a specific country. The ERF is a country-based, multi-donor funding mechanism with decisions made by the humanitarian community at the country level. It aims to fill critical funding gaps and to ensure the most urgent actions have enough resources at the onset of a crisis. For more information on the ERF, please visit <http://ochaonline.un.org>. For bank transfer details, please e-mail [rodriguez14@un.org](mailto:rodriguez14@un.org) and [unas@un.org](mailto:unas@un.org).

### **Give to the Central Emergency Response Fund**

For donors who want to support the United Nations disaster relief efforts without selecting a specific project, country or agency, the best option is to give to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). CERF is managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The fund provides seed funds to jump-start critical operations and fund life-saving programmes not yet covered by other donors. Since its inception in 2006, CERF has provided urgently needed assistance to victims of humanitarian disasters in more than 78 countries and territories. Thanks to this mechanism, the United Nations Secretary-General can release funds within hours of an emergency, which enables agencies to respond quickly to a crisis. CERF works on the basis of pre-positioned funds that are allocated only on the basis of the most critical humanitarian needs around the world. Therefore, funds cannot be earmarked for a specific emergency. However, your contribution will ensure that CERF continues its worldwide role to provide immediate relief in the most equitable, impartial and predictable manner. OCHA has an agreement with the United Nations Foundation, a 501C3, to receive tax-deductible donations from US taxpayers.

For more information, visit <http://cerf.un.org/>. To help CERF help in time, donate at [www.rapiddisasterrelief.org](http://www.rapiddisasterrelief.org)

## IN-KIND DONATIONS OF RELIEF GOODS

Recent emergencies show that well-intentioned donations of goods unfortunately can accumulate at ports and airports instead of reaching the affected population. The donations may also not be relevant to a disaster's specific needs. In-kind humanitarian donations should:

- Be well planned with national authorities and with the humanitarian community coordinating the relief effort.
- Correspond with priorities for life-saving supplies set by the Government of the affected country and the humanitarian community, and be necessary and appropriate for beneficiaries.
- Be accompanied by the documentation required by the recipient national authorities. In addition, in-kind contributions should have a clearly designated consignee, which is the entity responsible for receiving the cargo and onward transport and distribution. Cargo that lacks documentation and adequate planning for onward delivery can take up scarce resources, such as landing slots or storage space, and become a logistical burden for organizations on the ground.

*Please note: the United Nations and most humanitarian relief providers usually cannot cover freight and handling costs for donations from their place of origin to the affected country.*

Before sending in-kind donations, please consider the following:

### **1. Is the aid offered actually required?**

- The humanitarian community is usually organized into sectors (usually called clusters) such as health, shelter and logistics. Each cluster has a focal point that coordinates similar organizations to deliver specific types of assistance related to their area of work. For a list of global cluster focal points, please visit: <http://onerresponse.info>.
- Before sending donations, consult the cluster focal point for advice on whether the type of relief item is a priority, is required and is appropriate for the affected population.
- Examples of issues to consider are as follows:
  - Is there necessary cooking equipment available for food donations?
  - Do medicines and vaccines require transportation and storage at specific temperatures?
  - Are donations of clothes appropriate for the climate?
  - Is the local power supply compatible with donations of electronic equipment?
- The humanitarian community in the affected country is responsible, in coordination with governmental authorities, for setting priorities for the types of humanitarian aid delivered after a disaster or emergency. These priorities ensure that all resources are focused on delivering life-saving or life-enabling materials, rather than on delivering aid that will be needed later.
- General information on required items is available in public documents such as OCHA situation reports and country-specific humanitarian appeals. These documents are available on ReliefWeb: [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).

*Special note on donations of infant formula: In accordance with internationally accepted guidelines, there should be no donations or distribution of infant formula, bottles, teats, and other powdered or liquid milk and milk products. Any procurement of breast milk substitutes should be based on careful needs assessment in coordination with local health authorities and UNICEF. Human milk donations require fully functioning cold chains. The uncontrolled use of*

*these products could endanger infants' lives. Contact UNICEF for all queries regarding such donations.*

## **2. Who will receive the cargo?**

- Humanitarian aid sent to the affected country must be addressed to an entity as the intended recipient (consignee). This can be a local or international non-governmental organization (NGO), a United Nations agency or another entity that has already agreed to be responsible for arranging collection of the cargo, and onward delivery and distribution to beneficiaries.
- Sending goods addressed to “The people of (the affected country)” is not sufficient.
- Goods addressed to the “Government of (the affected country)” or “Relief Authorities of (the affected country)” should be explicitly accepted, preferably in writing, by the receiving party before being dispatched.
- Cargo that arrives at the airport with no consignee to collect and organize its distribution takes up valuable ramp and storage space. This prevents incoming aircraft from offloading and slows the system considerably.

## **3. Documentation: does it meet entry requirements?**

- All cargo, including humanitarian relief items arriving in the affected country, must be accompanied by correct documentation in order to be accepted by authorities such as border and airport authorities and customs.
- Basic documentation required for relief consignments includes:
  - Packing List
  - Bill of Lading/Airway Bill
  - Freight Certificate
  - Declaration of Value or Invoice
  - Gift Certificate (if applicable)
  - Vehicle Title (if applicable)
  - Certificate of Origin (if applicable)
  - Phyto-sanitary Certificate (if applicable)
- During the emergency phase, importation taxes and duties often do not apply to humanitarian cargo entering the affected country. However, the above-mentioned documentation is still required.
- Lack of documentation may result in cargo being refused entry. It might also result in delays of onward movement for failing to meet requirements of local authorities such as customs and Ministry of Agriculture.
- The more complete the documentation, the quicker the donations will reach their destination.

## **4. Packaging**

- Cargo must be packaged to withstand all stages of handling without breaking. It must be clearly labeled with full details of contents and the consignee.

## 5. What not to donate

Items that do not match an actual need can clog transportation channels and delay the transport of vital items. Therefore, before approaching the humanitarian community with a donation, check if your contribution is truly needed and is usable by the humanitarian relief providers and beneficiaries.

Also consider the relative costs and delays involved in transporting your in-kind donations to the affected country. For instance, the cost of sorting, labelling and transporting food may be higher than the cost of immediately buying it in the affected country or in a neighbouring country.

Regarding items that cannot be accepted, several general recommendations are consistent across the United Nations system:

- Goods or services that are not aligned with the goals of the United Nations
- Goods or services that require significant additional financial commitments by the United Nations, e.g. in-kind products or materials that do not include transportation arrangements, or software or other services that require the purchase of license(s) and/or maintenance
- Medicines that do not meet World Health Organization (WHO) requirements for in-kind contributions, or have expired or are near expiry. Medicines must have a shelf life of at least six months after arriving in a country. They should ideally be included in the WHO Model List of essential drugs.
- Used goods
- Untested new technologies or medicines, and prototypes.

## IN-KIND DONATIONS OF SERVICES & VOLUNTEERS

### In-Kind Donations of Experts

To ensure all resources are focused on the delivery of life-saving or life-enabling programmes, potential donors should consult the relevant cluster focal point before dispatching personnel. After a disaster, the list of country focal points is posted at <http://oneresponse.info>.

Services offered should be self-sufficient in terms of accommodation, food, inland transportation, etc. The humanitarian community generally has no funds to take into charge individuals other than its own staff, or to provide full or partial transportation support or other practicalities, such as medical evacuation.

Services accepted and provided can be reported (preferably with the monetary value) on the Financial Tracking System (see below).

### Volunteering Your Services

- Humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations do not accept volunteer services, but apply pre-defined recruitment rules and procedures. People seeking employment with humanitarian organizations at any time should consult [www.reliefweb.org/vacancies](http://www.reliefweb.org/vacancies) or apply through the Web-recruitment channel of the organization.
- Volunteerism benefits society and the volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by creating opportunities for participation. Volunteerism contributes best to tackling development challenges. The United Nations Volunteers

programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. To learn more or to register, please visit [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org).

## ENGAGING IN UN/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

- It is better to make long-term partnerships with the organization of your choice rather than sending ad-hoc proposals in the wake of a disaster.
- The UN-Business Partnership Gateway ([business.un.org](http://business.un.org)) allows companies willing to contribute cash or in-kind donations to browse through a vast catalogue of needs and partnership opportunities, or simply to submit ideas for collaboration. Based on shared characteristics, the site flags potential matches. It serves as a single-entry Web interface for business engagement with the entire United Nations system, including engagement in humanitarian action.
- Offers not accepted by the United Nations are forwarded to a network of NGOs for their consideration.

## REPORTING YOUR CASH AND IN-KIND DONATIONS

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) maintains the Financial Tracking Service (FTS). FTS is a global database that records all international humanitarian contributions (both cash and in-kind) to emergencies. This funding information is displaced in real time on the website: <http://fts.unocha.org>

FTS serves to improve donor decisions about resource allocations and also supports advocacy efforts by clearly indicating to what extent populations in crisis receive humanitarian aid, and in what proportion to the needs.

To help ensure comprehensive coverage on FTS and provide due visibility to the international humanitarian efforts, please report your contributions to: [fts@reliefweb.int](mailto:fts@reliefweb.int) and include the following information (as a minimum):

1. Donor name (country/organisation)
2. Name of recipient organisation (or mark "bilateral aid" for all assistance directed to the government of the affected country)
3. Contribution description
4. Amount in US\$ or original currency
5. For in-kind support, please provide a brief description of the goods or services and an estimated value in US\$ or original currency where possible.

### **For more information on cash contributions, please contact:**

External Relations and Partnerships Section, OCHA New York  
E-mail: [belalcazar@un.org](mailto:belalcazar@un.org) Tel: +1-917-3674280

Geographical Coordination and Monitoring Section, OCHA Geneva  
E-mail: [rockenfeller@un.org](mailto:rockenfeller@un.org) Tel: +41-22-917 1325

### **For more information on in-kind contributions, please contact:**

Logistics Support Unit, OCHA Geneva  
E-mail: [lsu@un.org](mailto:lsu@un.org)