

Investing in Recovery after Initial Relief

FACT: Every year, natural disasters rob 200 million people of their homes, jobs, basic needs like food and safe water and often, their lives.

THE PROBLEM

Disasters are happening more frequently across the world, increasing the need for response that is better planned and implemented. This year in Asia alone, more than 220,000 people died in natural disasters, with millions more losing their communities, livelihoods and access to basic health care.

Communities hit by disasters tend to receive emergency relief immediately afterward, but often see donor support drop dramatically after a few weeks. Millions of survivors from even the most widely reported disasters, like the 2004 Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, are still homeless and jobless, lack basic health care and do not have schools for their children to attend.

The effects of disasters are worsened by existing inequalities and weaknesses. In developing countries, the risk of being affected by disaster is 100 times greater than in rich countries¹ because of overpopulation, poor infrastructure and weak governments, among other challenges.

Initial appeals usually mobilize donors to provide materials like food and safe water. But support for rebuilding that helps communities regain permanent housing, health and education infrastructure and functioning markets lags behind. Among the most needed measures are those to better prepare for future disasters, such as robust alert and communications systems.

Donors often focus on disaster relief rather than recovery because they lack credible information about where and how to give, despite the overwhelming need for assistance. The considerable investment

WHY NOW?

The number of disasters each year has risen dramatically over the past 10 years and is expected to continue rising because of climate change. While the exact correlation between climate change and disasters is unclear, climate change is creating systemic conditions for more extreme weather events.² In 2007, of more than 400 natural disasters worldwide, floods caused more than 200.³

in time and resources required for meaningful recovery is also daunting to many donors. And failure to weave long-term recovery into philanthropic investment portfolios makes it difficult for communities affected by disasters to truly recover.

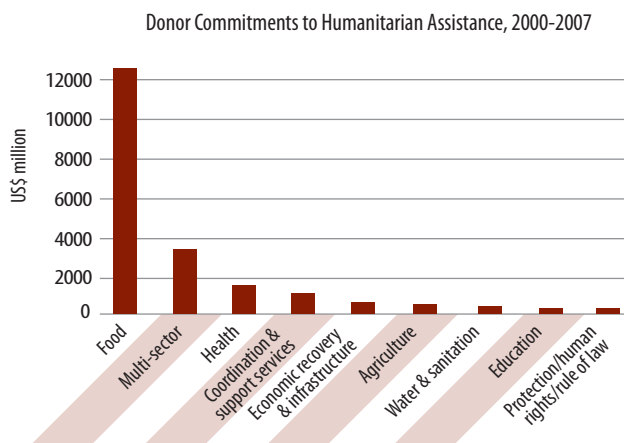
THE OPPORTUNITY

To help afflicted areas rebuild, donors can employ some of these strategies:

- **Add disaster funding to an existing mission.** Donors can most effectively leverage their resources for disaster recovery by tapping their in-house expertise. For example, a foundation whose mission is to support education can focus on putting children and teachers in a disaster area back in schools.
- **Fund locally established organizations that encourage community participation.** Organizations that have served an area for a long time are more likely to better understand the local context, have stronger ties with the local community and more effectively mobilize physical and human resources.
- **Support organizations that collaborate.** Organizations that partner with other nonprofits, businesses and local and national governments can leverage resources in multiple sectors to ensure sustainable renewal.
- **Help advocate and support disaster-risk reduction.** Advance preparation and early warning systems help reduce the damages disasters cause.

Additional Resources

- **AlertNet**, run by the Reuters Foundation, provides news, information and analysis on emergency relief (<http://www.alertnet.org/>).
- **ReliefWeb** is a United Nations website providing up-to-date information as well as data and documents on past emergencies (<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc100?OpenForm>).
- The United Nations Development Programme's **2007/2008 Human Development Report** shows how climate change is influencing disasters in the context of global development (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/>).



Source: Development Initiatives, "Global Humanitarian Assistance 2007-2008", <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/pdffdownloads/GHA%202007.pdf>, 27.

1. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2007-2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 76.

2. Ibid.

3. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), "CRED Crunch," EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, April 2008, <http://www.emdat.be/Documents/CredCrunch/Cred%20Crunch%2012.pdf>, 2.