

HOW CAN I HELP?

DONATIONS ITEMS, ACTIONS & GUIDELINES



AmericasRelief and Development Team, Inc.

T (305) 884-0441

F (305) 260-4214

info@americasrelief.org

www.americasrelief.org

HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN THE DISASTER REGION

The most efficient and effective way to help those affected by a disaster overseas is to make a monetary donation to a humanitarian organization that is implementing relief programs in the affected region. It is important to validate the reliability of such organizations through Government Agencies such as USAID or InterAction.

- **AmericasRelief Team** has years of experience working in the field of humanitarian disaster relief in the Americas. Additionally, we are actively involved with USAID on an ongoing basis.
- InterAction is an association of non-profit humanitarian organizations and has a list of members responding to the disaster on their website. Among these organizations you can also find **AmericasRelief Team**. See InterAction's Crisis Response List for more details.
- Another great resource is ReliefWeb is a website maintained by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is a repository of information, categorized by disaster, provided by humanitarian organization involved in the relief effort.

Resources

- USAID http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/
- InterAction <http://www.interaction.org/crisis-list>
- ReliefWeb www.reliefweb.int

MONETARY DONATIONS

Monetary donations are the most effective form of assistance because they allow humanitarian organizations to purchase (often within the affected region itself) the exact type and quantity of items needed by those affected by the crisis. Monetary donations therefore have several logistical advantages over commodity contributions:

- Monetary donations are more cost-effective than commodity contributions, because the cost of international shipping usually exceeds the cost of procuring the commodities within the region.
- Monetary donations, unlike commodity contributions, do not involve international transportation and handling, which can be very complex and time consuming.
- Humanitarian organizations can use monetary donations to specifically procure items on a priority-needs basis in the exact quantity and quality required - while commodity contributions often involve use of scarce resources (transportation, staff time, warehouse space, etc) for non-crucial or inappropriate commodities.
- Commodities procured by humanitarian organizations using monetary donations can be sorted, labeled (in the appropriate language), and packaged in exactly the manner required for storage and distribution and will reach the affected region much quicker than commodity contributions would.

In addition to these logistical advantages, monetary donations to humanitarian organizations also help to ensure that relief efforts contribute to the long-term sustainability and self-reliance of the affected region. This is because commodities that have been procured by humanitarian organizations using monetary donations:

- are more likely to be culturally and environmentally appropriate, and consistent with traditional practices and consumption patterns;
- support the economy of the affected region when procured locally, thereby contributing to the eventual goal of self-reliance and economic growth.

COMMODITY CONTRIBUTIONS

While monetary donations are preferred to commodity contributions, there may be rare instances when a commodity contribution would be of value to relief operations.

Conditions for Appropriate Commodity Contributions

The following is a list of conditions, which are necessary to ensure that a commodity contribution is appropriate. These conditions can serve as a guide for potential donors of commodities to determine whether or not to contribute the commodities.

- A humanitarian organization with staff in the affected region should request the commodities being offered. The request must be very specific and the organization should approve the commodities after having reviewed all relevant technical specifications. The requesting organization should also have the capacity to distribute the commodities to the beneficiary population or be partnered with an organization in the region that does.
- The commodities offered should not be available for purchase in the affected region. Or if they are available locally, their procurement within the region should be cost-prohibitive. The reason for this condition is that relief efforts should strive to support the regional economy through local procurement whenever possible, in order to promote sustainability and self-reliance. In addition, local procurement ensures cultural and environmental appropriateness.
- The commodities being offered must be useable and sustainable. The commodities should be adaptable to local technical and environmental conditions, such as voltage, dust, temperature, humidity, etc. When relevant, local language must be used (for example, computers should be programmed in the local language and instruction manuals and pharmaceutical labels must be translated). When necessary, appropriate technical training must be provided. The beneficiaries must be able to obtain associated supplies (for example, paper and toner cartridges for printers and copiers). Repair services for the commodities must be available locally.

[InterAction](#) maintains a list of its member organizations that sometimes accept commodity contributions.

Handling Appropriate Commodity Contributions

If all of the conditions for appropriate commodity contributions are met, a commodity contribution plan and inspection mechanism should be in place before any commodities are collected.

The commodity contribution plan must encompass all logistical and financial aspects of the contribution, from point of collection to ultimate distribution to the intended beneficiaries. The plan must involve the donor, the receiving organization, and the distributing organization (if different) and should address the following issues:

- The confirmed need of the beneficiaries for the commodities being offered: Specific characteristics, quality, and quantity should be clear and verified.
- The packaging and labeling requirements: Commodity contributions need to be packaged and labeled in specific ways in order for shipping, customs, storage, and distribution to proceed smoothly.
- The shipping arrangements, including funding: International shipping is very expensive and extremely complicated. A source of funding for the shipment must be identified before collections begin. A freight forwarder and consignee for the shipment must also be identified in advance.
- The humanitarian organization's local storage and distribution plan: The organization should have resources in the affected region ready to receive, offload, store, and eventually distribute the commodities to the beneficiaries.

All commodities must be inspected prior to shipment in order to ensure that the above conditions have been met. In addition, the inspection should ensure that the commodities are in working order and are safe from tampering, defects, or other conditions that could cause danger to the intended beneficiaries. The receiving organization should be able to provide additional information on inspections mechanisms.

[InterAction](#) maintains a list of its member organizations that sometimes accept commodity contributions.

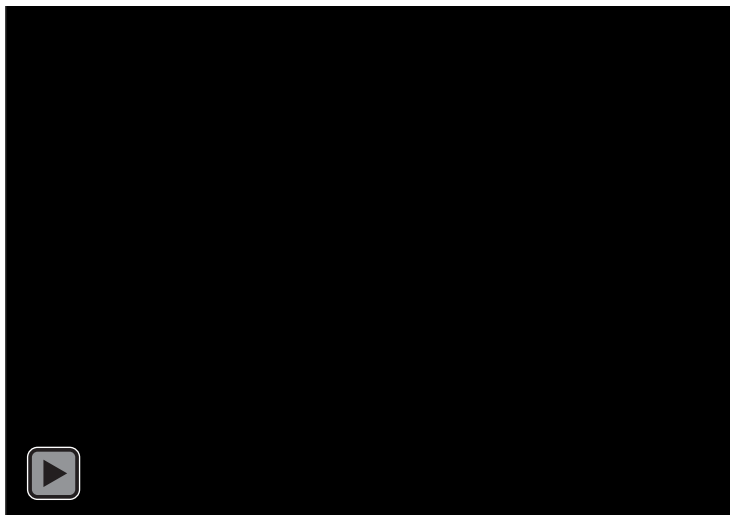
Alternate Uses for Commodity Contributions

If a commodity collection does not fit the criteria or appropriateness, an alternate possibility is a yard sale of the collected material with the proceeds being donated to a humanitarian organization working in the affected region. The sale could be held via a church or community group, and advertising it as supporting people affected by the disaster might increase patronage.

Another possibility is to donate the commodities to charitable organizations operating in the US. There is plenty of need across this country, and commodity contributions made in the US do not face most of the problems described in these pages: transportation cost, urgency, cultural appropriateness, etc. Examples of charitable organizations include the Salvation Army, Goodwill, homeless shelters, the local chapter of the American Red Cross, and others. Check a local phone book for more information.

A DONATIONS MESSAGE FROM THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

View or listen to a message from the humanitarian community about the best way you can help those affected by an overseas disaster...



DRUG DONATIONS

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), donated drugs are often inappropriate for the emergency to which they are sent or level of care available. They may also be unfamiliar to local health-care professionals and may not comply with local policies. And they may even be dangerous.

- See [WHO's Guidelines for Drug Donations](#)
- For more information, see www.drugdonations.org

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer opportunities in disaster settings are extremely rare, and are usually limited to people with prior disaster experience and technical skills (such as health, engineering, etc). To register your skills and experience for a possible volunteer opportunity, go to the [Center for International Disaster Information's](#) registration page. Or read about [Volunteers for Prosperity](#), a volunteer program managed by USAID. For more information on volunteering, visit [InterAction](#).

MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES

- [Guidelines for Appropriate International Disaster Donations](#), produced by [The Center for International Disaster Information \(CIDI\)](#). CIDI can also be reached by telephone at (703) 276-1914.
- [Tips on Charitable Giving](#), produced by the Better Business Bureau's [Wise Giving Alliance](#)
- [A Guide for Effective Aid](#), produced by the [Pan American Health Organization](#)
- [Donor Information](#), produced by [GuideStar](#)
- [Tips for Giving Wisely](#), produced by the [American Institute of Philanthropy](#)
- [Tips and Resources](#), produced by [Charity Navigator](#)

For guidance on making an informed donation decision, see the [Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance](#).

FAST, EASY SHIPPING WITH OUR RELIEF CALCULATOR

Through **AmericasRelief Team's** new Freight Calculator, we are able to offer hassle free shipping with immediate quotes and preferential pricing. Please visit our [website](#) to learn more.



FREE PREPOSITIONING & STAGING WAREHOUSE

While we hope that this hurricane season will prove to be less active than predicted, we all know that natural disasters will inevitably strike—suddenly and horrifically—somewhere in the region. Therefore **AmericasRelief Team** and corporate partner LAPARKAN, have arranged for the use of a prepositioning and staging warehouse at no cost to NGOs. Visit our [website](#) for details.

AmericasRelief Team
P.O Box 546135
Miami, Florida 33154
T (305) 884-0441
info@americasrelief.org



Emergency Response Center
3775 NW 77 Street
Miami, Florida 33147
Use NW 75 Street Entrance
T (305) 836-4393

CLOTHING & SHOE DRIVES

Clothing drives for community groups, schools, businesses, and others. For community clothing drives, call **AmericasRelief Team** at (305) 884-0441 to get details on pick-up and assistance.



AmericasRelief Team uses clothing collection bins as a means of generating funds for disaster response in the Americas. The income **AmericasRelief Team** receives from used clothing collection bins will go to underwrite such things as shipping, transportation, and warehousing of donated relief aid to make sure it gets to those in need as fast as possible.