



Disaster Relief

Help now,
help later,
help better

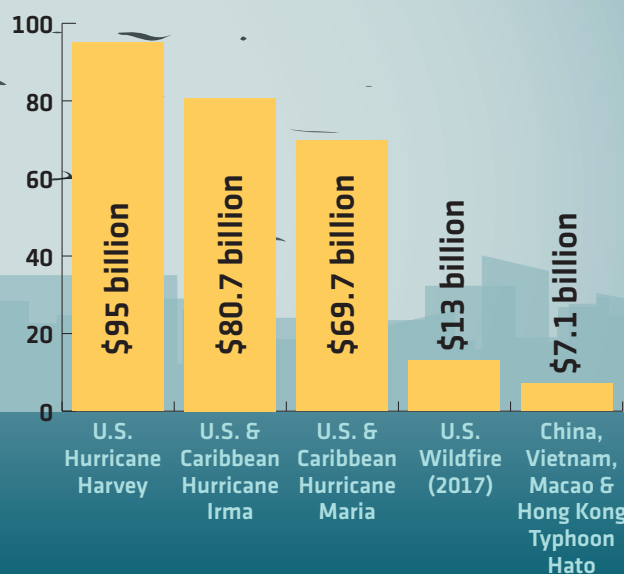
Disasters pull at the heart. People displaced by disasters have often lost everything and desperately need help. Globally, natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes are less deadly than man-made ones such as war and famine. But their economic impact has risen sharply. The global mortality rate for 2017 for natural disasters is well below the average annual mortality of the past 10 years. Yet, the economic impact of such natural disasters has risen to a whopping \$334 billion in 2017. Disasters can inspire tremendous generosity. Keeping some guidelines in mind can make your giving more effective.

First, give cash, not goods. Unless people at the site of the disaster report that specific items are needed, sending cash is best. The early days of responding to a disaster are often chaotic. There isn't time to sort through donations, which then take up space or likely go to waste. Needs also change fast, and cash donations allow organizations responding to the disaster to shift purchases and programming as the situation evolves. If you want to give something more tangible, consult [NeedsList](#), which matches the specific needs of NGOs and disaster victims to donors and local suppliers of needed goods. Purchasing needed goods from local suppliers avoids shipping costs and supports the local economy in addition to helping victims.

Economic losses due to disasters

In addition to the human toll of disasters, there is an escalating long-term economic impact.

The Atlantic hurricanes that affected the U.S. and Caribbean account for the top four of five spots.



Source: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/adsr_2017.pdf

\$142 billion

The annual average loss from disasters between 2007 and 2016

\$334 billion

Economic loss from 2017 alone

Second, plan on recovery taking a long time.

For example, it has taken a full year for almost all communities in Puerto Rico to regain electricity after Hurricane Maria took out the island's power grid in September of 2017. In contrast, media and donor attention to a disaster is quite short. The [Center for Disaster Philanthropy](#) estimates that one-third of all giving is complete within one to four weeks of a disaster occurring; two-thirds of giving is complete one to two months after the disaster; six months post-disaster, giving has stopped. Full recovery efforts are typically on the scale of years, and philanthropy is still needed well after the event. Longer term recovery, risk mitigation and better preparedness also present unique opportunities for creating positive, long-term change as well as significant cost savings. (See Phases of Disaster Relief, page 17)

Strategies donors can use to combat this mismatch of short-term giving and long-term needs include giving to a pooled fund that gathers donations when attention is greatest but disburses grants to individual nonprofits

over a longer time period. Examples include several funds run by the Center for Disaster Philanthropy. Donors can also consider setting aside funds to make multi-year gifts to organizations which are engaged in longer term recovery efforts, and monitor the progress over time.

Finally, consider supporting efforts promoting innovation, coordination, and accountability.

Disasters are a fact of life, but we can get better at responding to and preparing for them. For example, in 2017, the [World Food Programme](#) assisted 19.2 million people at risk of starvation with cash transfers, amounting to 30% of WFP's food assistance portfolio. Dispensing cash instead of food where possible is a relatively new approach, and has reduced the cost of assistance, maximizing the number of people that can be reached, and allowing for more flexible and responsive help. Studies have shown that every \$1 given to a refugee or vulnerable citizen results in another \$2 in the local economy.

[RAPIDO](#), a coalition of six organizations

in Texas works to accelerate disaster recovery through a bottom-up community-based approach, considering architectural issues (such as inadequate building codes), as well as the social, economic, political and policy environment. For additional information on organizations focused on disaster accountability, see page 15.

What follows are short profiles of two types of disasters, with examples of nonprofits that are working to address both immediate and longer-term needs.

NATURAL DISASTERS: HURRICANES

Michael and Florence (2018)

Hurricane Michael struck the Florida panhandle in October 2018 as the fourth most powerful storm ever to hit the U.S. Michael caused widespread destruction in several coastal communities, and caused tornadoes in Georgia and flooding throughout North Carolina and Virginia. Michael's flooding added to significant damage previously caused by Hurricane Florence, which brought record

flooding throughout the Carolinas in September.

Dozens of people died in both storms and their aftermath. While many people lost homes, others such as migrant farm workers lost livelihoods as agricultural crops were destroyed. Many organizations that mobilized in advance of Florence have extended operations further south to also address the needs of victims of Michael. Organizations well-positioned to help include:

- **Americares** and **Direct Relief**. Both were on the ground in North Carolina before Hurricane Florence arrived, and have been providing emergency medicines and relief supplies to families displaced by both hurricanes.
- **Mercy Corps**. It has helped to address immediate needs through a partnership with **Team Rubicon**. The groups plan to utilize emergency cash assistance to the most affected and vulnerable communities, giving storm survivors the opportunity to purchase whatever supplies they need for recovery.
- **Episcopal Relief & Development**. It works with local partners to support seasonal farmworkers in rural areas, providing items such as water, food, cleaning supplies, clothing, and transportation to safe locations.
- Local and State Community Foundations (all with disaster relief funds established for longer term recovery). Examples include: the **Central Carolina Community Foundation**, **Foundation for the Carolinas**, **North Carolina Community Foundation**, and the **Florida Disaster Fund of the Volunteer Florida Foundation**.

Harvey, Irma, Maria (2017)

A staggering 25.8 million people were affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017. Some 4.7 million people registered for federal assistance from FEMA, more than all who registered after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and Sandy combined. Housing, access to healthcare, and food insecurity continue to be critical concerns, particularly for members of storm-affected communities who were vulnerable even before the hurricanes. For example, only about half of applicants in Puerto

Disaster Relief Accountability

Organizations ensuring effectiveness

Keeping track of organizations and their effectiveness is challenging, especially since the chaos of disasters can invite corruption or misuse of donor funds. Three nonprofit organizations that can help include: **Accountability Lab**, **The Disaster Accountability Project** (DAP), and **The Center for Disaster Philanthropy**.

Accountability Lab partners with local NGOs around the world to promote greater accountability and responsiveness of government and other institutions. After the Nepal earthquake, for example, Accountability Lab partners set up citizen “help desks” to coordinate relief efforts and serve as a conduit for on-the-ground information about what was and was not working.

DAP, meanwhile, has various reports investigating the effectiveness of agencies operating in a range of locations, including Haiti, Nepal, and New York after Superstorm Sandy. It also offers resources such as the Disaster Policy Wiki, which contains more than 1,000 post-disaster relief policy recommendations designed to improve management systems. And DAP’s SmartResponse curates “how to help” lists after disasters to support organizations that are local and more transparent.

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy tracks and provides information on various disasters, helps foundations and corporations come up with strategies for their disaster-related giving, and creates pooled disaster-related funds for which it helps vet grantees. The funds can be used flexibly to respond to changing conditions on the ground.





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Rico received any government housing assistance due to a lack of official property records as required by FEMA. Organizations working on these issues include:

- **All Hands and Hearts.** This nonprofit mobilizes volunteers to work on rebuilding schools, homes and other infrastructure projects along with communities affected by major disasters around the world. The organization develops part-

nerships with local groups, with goals of building long term resiliency as well as improving local capacity to handle future responses. For example, a partnership with **My Brother's Workshop** on St. Thomas helps provide construction job training and experience for local youth.

- **Local community foundations and funds.** Examples include the **Community Foundation of the U.S. Virgin Islands**, the Hurricane Harvey Relief fund at the

Greater Houston Community Foundation, and the Puerto Rico Real Time Recovery Fund managed by the nonprofit **ConPRmetidos.**

- **Local Food Banks.** **Feeding America** connects surplus food to local food banks and pantries around the U.S., including the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Donors can give nationally or locally to specific food banks in hurricane affected communities.

MAN-MADE DISASTERS AND REFUGEES

Worldwide, more than 68 million people have been displaced from their homes. Of these, over 25 million are considered refugees: people who left their own countries due to violence or a well-founded fear of persecution. Half of these are children.

Some crises are relatively recent: For example, tensions between the Myanmar government and the Rohingya ethnic minority flared into widespread government-sponsored violence in 2016. Since then, nearly

900,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh, gathering in what is now the largest refugee camp in the world. The civil war in Yemen has been intensifying since 2015, with horrifying consequences for the civilian population. Other conflicts, such as those in Syria and Sudan, have lasted much longer.

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy estimates that 48% of disaster philanthropy goes to natural disasters, yet only 17% goes to man-made ones despite more people being affected by such humanitarian crises. Donors can help make up this difference by supporting organizations providing urgent, humanitarian aid, as well as those helping refugees and displaced persons increase their self-sufficiency and long-term stability, including resettlement. Below is a sample of organizations involved in this work:

- **UNICEF – USA** provides immunizations, clean water, food, education, child protection, safe spaces, and post-trauma mental health care services to vulnerable children around the world, many of them refugees.
- **International Rescue Committee** supports refugees and victims of man-made/humanitarian crises. It provides emergency supplies and medical care, education for children, skill training for employment, and resettlement support.
- **Save the Children** supports children and their families by providing clean water, therapeutic feeding for malnutrition, access to health care services, cash vouchers for food support, and safe spaces for children to learn and play.
- **International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)** offers free legal aid to refugees who wish to resettle from their countries of first refuge. IRAP also litigates for refugee rights in local court systems, and leverages its grassroots network to identify and assist most at-risk refugees, such as female survivors of sexual or gender-based violence, children with medical emergencies, and persecuted religious minorities.

For additional information see our blogs: [Four Things You Can do to Support Refugees](#) and [Family Separation Crisis on the U.S. Border: How Donors Can Help](#).

Phases of Disaster Relief

Disaster relief involves four distinct phases. Needs persist long after the headlines fade. Funding beyond the initial phase is a huge opportunity for philanthropists to make a larger impact.

