

GUIDE TO HUMANITARIAN GIVING

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 AND VOLUNTEERS
- ENGAGING IN UNITED NATIONS/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS
- REPORTING YOUR CASH AND IN-KIND DONATIONS



OCHA

United Nations
Office for the Coordination
of Humanitarian Affairs

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 that is included in a concerted strategic 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.

I. CASH DONATIONS

To donate cash under the auspices of the United Nations, please consider the following options:

Give to the activities/projects of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations listed in funding 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, response strategies and projects. They are coordinated, strategic humanitarian plans developed by organizations working on the ground in an emergency and 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 ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal.

Give to the Central Emergency Response Fund

For donors who want to support the general United Nations disaster relief efforts, the best option is to give to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). CERF is managed by OCHA. It provides seed funds to jump-start critical operations and funds life-saving programmes not yet covered by other donors in "forgotten" emergencies. Thanks to this mechanism, the United Nations Secretary-General can release funds within hours of an emergency. This enables agencies to respond quickly to a crisis. Funds cannot be earmarked for a specific emergency because 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. Your contribution will ensure that CERF continues its worldwide task of providing immediate relief in an equitable, impartial and predictable manner. OCHA has an agreement with the United Nations Foundation, a 501(c)3, to receive tax-deductible donations from US and UK taxpayers. For more information, visit cerf.un.org. Help us help in time!

- **United Nations Member States** should contact the CERF Secretariat directly at cerf@un.org or fax: +1 212 963 1312 to make a pledge or contribution.
- **Private organizations** or **individuals** can donate online through rapiddisasterrelief.org

Give to a country-based Emergency Response Fund

A country-based 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. ERFs are country-based pooled funds established to strengthen the operational capacities of humanitarian actors for a rapid and coordinated response to emergencies. An ERF is a multi-donor funding mechanism under the overall management and oversight of the Humanitarian Coordinator. OCHA performs the day-to-day management and financial administration. Funds are channelled through OCHA to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies. ERFs aim to fill critical funding gaps and to ensure the most urgent actions have sufficient resources to respond to urgent needs. As of January 2011, OCHA manages ERFs in 16 locations: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe. For more information, please visit ochaonline.un.org.

- For bank transfer details, please e-mail: donateOCHA@un.org
- Please make cheques payable to “United Nations” and indicate in the bottom left-hand corner that it is for “ERF (insert the country of your choice)”. Mail to: UN-OCHA, External Relations & Partnerships Section, 380 Madison Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017.

Give to OCHA

OCHA is a department of the United Nations Secretariat. It ensures a coordinated, timely and effective international response in support of Government-led humanitarian relief efforts in natural disasters and other crises. OCHA is also mandated to mobilize resources on behalf of the international aid community (United Nations and international NGOs). OCHA relies on voluntary contributions for 95 per cent of its budgetary requirements. The organization gladly accepts donations from governments, individuals and corporations. If you want to make a direct contribution to support OCHA's coordination, information management, humanitarian financing, advocacy and policy development work, please contact OCHA's Donor Relations Section for bank details at donateOCHA@un.org. For more information about OCHA's work, please visit ochaonline.un.org.

- Please make cheques payable to “United Nations” and indicate in the bottom left-hand corner that it is for “OCHA unearmarked”. You can also insert a crisis of choice, e.g. “OCHA Sudan”. Mail to: UN-OCHA, Donor Relations Section, Room S12, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

II. IN-KIND DONATIONS OF RELIEF GOODS

In-kind humanitarian donations should:

- 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 well planned with national authorities and with the humanitarian community undertaking the relief effort.
- Be accompanied by the documentation required by the recipient national authorities. In-kind contributions must also have a clearly designated consignee, which is the entity responsible for receiving the cargo and onward transport and distribution. Cargo without 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 or clusters of activities, such as health, shelter and logistics. Each cluster has a focal point who 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 the inter-agency web platform: onerresponse.info.
- Before sending donations, consult the cluster focal point for advice on whether the proposed relief items are required and 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 clothing donations 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: 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 ([unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org)) 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 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.
- It is not sufficient to send goods addressed to “The people of (the affected country)”.
- 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.

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 agents.
- 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)
 - Phytosanitary certificate (if applicable)
- During the emergency phase, import 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 labelled 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 United Nations goals.
 - 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 (to view the list, please go to the WHO website who.int/medicines/publications/essentialmedicines/en/)
 - Used goods.
 - Untested new technologies or medicines, and prototypes.

III. IN-KIND DONATIONS OF SERVICES AND 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 onerresponse.info.
- Personnel 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 Service (see below).

Volunteering your services

- Volunteerism benefits society and the volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by creating participation opportunities. 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 unv.org.
- Other organizations within 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 reliefweb.org/vacancies or apply through the Web-recruitment channel of the organization.

IV. ENGAGING IN UN/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The UN-Business Partnership Gateway (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 website 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.

- It is better to make long-term partnerships with the organization of your choice rather than sending ad-hoc proposals following a disaster.
- Offers not accepted by the United Nations are forwarded to a network of NGOs for their consideration.

V. REPORTING YOUR CASH AND IN-KIND DONATIONS

OCHA maintains the Financial Tracking Service (FTS). FTS is a global database that records all international humanitarian contributions (cash and in-kind) to emergencies. This funding information is displayed in real time on the FTS website: fts.unocha.org

FTS improves 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 international humanitarian efforts, please report your contributions to fts@reliefweb.int and include the following information (as a minimum):

- Donor name (country/organization)
- Name of recipient organization (or mark "bilateral aid" for all assistance directed to the Government of the affected country)
- Contribution description
- Amount in US\$ or original currency

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, please e-mail: ochany@un.org

This guide is published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA's mission is to alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies; advocate the rights of people in need; promote preparedness and prevention; and facilitate sustainable solutions. For more information on OCHA, or details of how to fund OCHA, please visit OCHA Online at ochaonline.un.org and click on the "Humanitarian Funding" tab. To see funding details for current and past emergencies, visit OCHA's Financial Tracking Service at fts.unocha.org