



Giving to Tsunami Relief

Waiting for the Second Wave

The numbers are staggering. It is estimated that 140,000 people have been killed. Within less than two weeks, over \$4 billion in public aid has been pledged for relief efforts. Charities have raised over \$200 million from private sources and by all accounts that number will continue to increase.

Our clients and friends have been asking important questions: What organizations should receive support? How much? When is the appropriate time to give?

More than ever, it is essential to proceed with wisdom as well as compassion. Both your head and your heart should be engaged in making a difference. The Pan-American Health Organization asserts that "the quality and appropriateness of the assistance is more important than its size, monetary value or the speed with which it arrives." The effectiveness of a gift is far more important than the scale or speed of aid - particularly in light of the overwhelming relief effort undertaken by national governments and disaster relief organizations such as the Red Cross.

Excellence in Giving recommends that donors exercise patience in their giving strategy. Small, immediate cash gifts may be given in the near-term to provide necessary food, clean water and medicines. However, major gifts should be earmarked for future giving.

Here are a few reasons we advocate waiting to give.

1) To be most effective, efforts must be coordinated. Recent global disasters, such as 9/11 and the Iran earthquake, have taught us that while immediate aid is critical, a secondary calamity occurs in the months and years that follow. In the near-term, information and resources are uncoordinated - agencies often duplicate efforts and provide impractical relief. Similarly, cultural

or even medical misunderstandings can divert efforts from urgent needs. Giving funds without effective distribution channels will limit the gift's effectiveness.

2) Immediate aid is sufficient. Several organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, are alerting donors that they do not need more money for tsunami relief. What is critically needed, they say, is logistical coordination: managers to sort goods, identify priorities and coordinate the relief effort.

3) The needs of the victims are long-term. Recovery from a disaster of this magnitude will take years. The destruction of fishing boats, stores, vehicles, harbors and roads will present a staggering economic need long after the headlines have disappeared from the front page.

4) Funds should be designated for specific purpose. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank both admit that it is too early to know the real damage caused by the disaster. As major organizations gear up for the rebuilding efforts, specific funds and programs will be created to address the most critical needs.

While the magnitude of the current human suffering cannot be overstated, the economic and humanitarian crisis that will face Southeast Asia is massive. Excellence in Giving is convinced that the most impactful gifts will be those directed to worthy organizations in the next six to twelve months.

As our clients direct us, Excellence in Giving will be evaluating various organizations and rebuilding projects in the region to identify the most appropriate, long-term response to the tsunami disaster.

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