

However, many of the private groups and individuals that collected and sent "relief items" did not have any first hand information concerning the needs of the disaster victims and did not concern themselves with the issues of how, or by whom, the goods would be distributed upon their arrival in Jamaica. Many of these groups were community, civic, and church organizations (such as the Jamaican Civic Group of Southern New York) that were responding to a disaster for the first time.

As defined by various Jamaican non-governmental organizations the priorities of the disaster victims immediately following the hurricane were:

1. Roofing materials.
2. Food.
3. Bedding.

Roofing material was the most urgently needed item. Once a family could cover their roof they could then return home and begin rebuilding their lives. However this was a problem that required a massive amount of funding and the ability to implement a nationwide distribution scheme. Problems of this scale can only be adequately addressed by governmental organizations having the ability to set national policy, design and implement a nation-wide distribution system, and having the large sums of money needed to purchase massive quantities of building materials. This effort was jointly managed by the government of Jamaica and the U.S. government, both the USAID Jamaican mission and OFDA.

In-kind donations received from the U.S. private sector primarily addressed the second of these priorities. Typical of U.S. public response to overseas disasters, and epitomizing the myth that everything is needed and it is needed now, was an appeal by a North Texas group that was soliciting donations of food and clothing to send to Jamaica. The following appeal was published in the Fort Worth Star Telegram of September 16, 1988. "Storm victims particularly need bottled water, ready-to-eat, non-perishable foods and summer clothing, said a deacon at Richland Hills Church of Christ who has made several trips to Jamaica." This erroneous appeal was echoed in communities throughout the United States. The compounded results of a nationwide effort, spearheaded by loosely organized civic and church groups, was an overwhelming amount of unnecessary and inappropriate supplies converging and collecting in Kingston's port.

It should be noted that this appeal for bottled water did not appear in the press until September 16, already four days after the hurricane had struck. Additional time needed to collect bottled water, and to organize and secure funding for

transportation would mean that, optimistically, the shipment of bottled water could not be expected to arrive, clear customs, and be distributed in Jamaica until at least two weeks after the disaster had occurred. At this point the bottled water would no longer be needed. It would have been advisable to program available resources towards the affected populations longer term needs.

In-Kind Donations Sent to Jamaica

Most of the in-kind donations sent to Jamaica were food and used clothing. The items that arrived in Jamaica came mostly by ship but a significant amount of goods were also airlifted. (An estimated ratio of items arriving air:ship was 1:8).

"Because international communications are so limited, there is no advance notice of shipments. [Red Cross workers] arrive at the airport by 9 o'clock each morning. They check each flight until sundown (the airport closes at dark because the lights aren't working), watching for materials destined for Red Cross distribution.

They get discouraged when they find cargo space wasted by shipments of used clothing and outdated medicine, given by well-meaning individuals who don't understand disaster relief needs. What is really needed is plastic sheeting, roofing materials, blankets, and cash. Cash to pay for the gasoline for the trucks, for the communications gear, for the operations of the relief programme, etc."¹⁶

Many items sent to Jamaica were unsolicited by the organizations that received and distributed them and often did not respond to the needs of the disaster victims. The sources of the unsolicited goods, and the organizations that collected and sent those goods to Jamaica, could not be determined by the Jamaican PVOs. An attempt was made to track one large donation of U.S. \$1.5 million of new clothing that was sent from Pennsylvania to Jamaica and consigned to one of the larger relief organizations. When questioned about the donation in Kingston, the organization was neither aware that the shipment was coming nor had any record of having received it. They did say that it was possible that

¹⁶ Donia, Tom and Flatoe, Hans, The Magazine of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Hurricane Season Creates Havoc, (Geneva, Switzerland, December, 1988), p. 8.

the clothing shipment could still be in a container at the wharf awaiting customs clearance, but stated they could not determine the origin of most of the relief supplies they distributed. With few exceptions, the sources of the unsolicited goods that arrived in Jamaica remain unknown.

Food Donations

The indigenous Jamaican relief organizations confirmed that food was second only to roofing materials as the greatest need following the hurricane. Food was desperately needed and almost all donations were considered to be useful. Most of the food received was canned goods; mostly canned meat, fish, vegetables, and lesser amounts of grains. All food received was appreciated but some donations were clearly more appropriate than others.

The most appropriate food items sent were canned protein (sardines, corned beef, and legumes) green vegetables and grains. There were complaints about items received for which Jamaicans "do not have a taste." Examples of such items are tuna fish, asparagus, and other unfamiliar vegetables. Although many of the foods were nutritious, items not familiar to the Jamaican diet were not as appreciated. In addition, there was a third class of food donations that was clearly inappropriate for disaster relief victims, such as cake mixes.

At no time immediately following the Hurricane was there a food shortage in Jamaica. However, large agricultural losses were sure to create future supply problems due to the devastation of crops and livestock. The donations of canned foods received from abroad were used to supplement grains that were both purchased on the local market and received through in-kind donations. The Salvation Army had made arrangements prior to the hurricane to receive food donations from some major suppliers in Kingston. The locally procured grains were later supplemented by in-kind donations of canned foods. By procuring food from locally available sources the Salvation Army was able to begin food distribution operations prior to the arrival of the first shipment of U.S. food.

No organization felt that the influx of donated foods had any negative effect on the sales of local manufacturers. This was because, to a great extent, there was no significant local food production or marketing activity during the first month following the hurricane due to the loss of electrical power and because "work time" was being largely dedicated to the rehabilitation of personal housing and agriculture.

Clothing Donations

Although there was some need for clothing a very high percentage of what was sent was not useful. Most of the clothing arrived in unmarked boxes that were neither properly packed nor sorted. Almost no new clothing was sent. The two largest non-government distributors of relief supplies were the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The Red Cross reported that 40% of the clothing they received had to be burned or dumped because the items were of such poor quality that they could not be distributed. Similarly, the Salvation Army said they had to destroy 35% of the clothing donations they received. Unfortunately, the necessity of transporting, sorting, and destroying these unwanted items diverted limited cash resources from other priority activities.

Upon arrival in Jamaica, all of the clothing donations needed to be sorted into the basic categories of men's, women's, and children's and the useless items had to be weeded out. Most of the clothing donations were used items that had been randomly stuffed into boxes marked clothes. Many of the boxes contained an assortment of both food and clothing. Had the clothes been sorted and screened before arrival in Jamaica this would have greatly facilitated distribution and somewhat lessened their management costs.

Several Jamaican PVOs contended that they had received more clothes than were needed and, if in-kind donations are sent, food should be emphasized over clothing. Several relief officials stated that if there is a confirmed need for clothing that only new clothing should be sent. It was felt that the monetary value of the used clothing was not equal to the costs incurred in its sorting and distribution. Clothing donations were most useful when they arrived sorted, in well marked boxes, were of high quality, and were consigned to organizations that had specifically requested them. The vast majority of the clothing received did not meet these criteria.

It was necessary for Jamaican private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to hire workers to sort and repack clothing donations. All of the PVOs spoken with were glad to have received some amount of clothing but they also emphasized that the sorting and distribution process had been both expensive and frustrating, particularly in consideration of the amount of junk that was received.

It should be noted that Hurricane Gilbert did not significantly increase the need for clothing in Jamaica. This is because most hurricane victims did not end up with fewer clothes as a result of the hurricane. Clothing got wet but in most cases was not destroyed.

Transportation of Unsolicited Supplies:

The Denton Amendment

In 1985, section 1540 of the Defense Authorization Act was amended to authorize the Department of Defense to provide transport of humanitarian goods on military flights, on a space available basis, to any country in the world where the U.S. military is scheduled to fly. The law requires that U.S. government involvement must respond to a legitimate humanitarian need for the commodities; the goods must be suitable for their designated humanitarian purpose and there must be adequate arrangements for the in-country distribution of the commodities. U.S. donor agencies are encouraged to use existing PVOs in the country of destination for the internal transport and distribution of any such donated commodities. To use the Denton Amendment, the recipient organization within the destination country must agree to the following responsibilities:

1. secure approval by the local government;
2. make customs arrangements;
3. receive the cargo and;
4. transport and distribute the donated items to the beneficiaries.¹⁷

Meeting these requirements assures that the goods meet an identified need and will in no way become the burden of any public agency to store, transport, or distribute. Since 1986, AID's Office of Private Voluntary Cooperation has coordinated over 200 Denton Amendment shipments to 35 countries. Under normal conditions, it takes three months to process a Denton Amendment application and transport the goods.

Until Hurricane Gilbert, the program had not been used to support a sudden-onset relief operation. Following Hurricane Gilbert there was a tremendous desire on the part of many American citizens to send relief items such as food, clothing, and medical supplies to people in need in Jamaica. Many of the groups had collected items but did not have sufficient funds to pay commercial transport rates. The Denton Amendment was identified as a procedure through which this could be accomplished. Through the cooperation of all participating parties (the donors, the State Department, USAID/Jamaica, the Department of Defense, and

¹⁷ Defense Authorization Act, Guidance for Use of the Denton Amendment, Section 20, Title X of the U.S. Code, (Washington, D.C., 1985).

the consignee) the usual 2-3 month process was able to be accomplished in one and a half to two weeks.¹⁸

Immediately following the hurricane the Jamaican government was bombarded with relief shipments arriving by air and sea through means other than the Denton amendment. Many of these items were not designated for particular recipient organizations and therefore, the tasks of sorting, labeling, transporting, and distribution had fallen on the Jamaican government which was ill prepared to manage or finance such an immense undertaking. Since Denton Amendment transported commodities must be consigned to a specific in-country organization, these tasks and costs for Denton Amendment shipments were assumed by the recipient organization. When commodities were specifically identified as having arrived via a Denton Amendment shipment, feedback from the recipient groups, and from the government of Jamaica, was that the goods had arrived in a timely manner, were generally well labeled, in good condition, and responded to an identified need.

The success of the program in Jamaica can also be attributed to the excellent in-country coordination on the part of USAID/Jamaica. Shortly following the hurricane, USAID/Jamaica hired a contractor to manage the Denton shipments. There is no doubt that this greatly facilitated the timely delivery of goods through this program.

Commercial Airlines

Initially, many of the goods shipped by air were sent via commercial airlines that normally fly to Jamaica, including both Air Jamaica and Eastern Airlines. For the most part, this resulted from ad-hoc agreements between airlines and individual relief groups. As the volume of miscellaneous goods began to pile-up at the Kingston airport, and there began to be complaints concerning the quality and utility of the goods being shipped, airlines began to back away from shipping additional relief cargoes. However, in the first few weeks of the disaster several airlines assisted in transporting relief supplies free of charge and several well organized relief groups, as well as quick and resourceful ad-hoc groups, were able to take advantage of this.

¹⁸ Mann, Ada Jo, Automation Research Systems, Jamaica Trip Report: OFDA Post Gilbert Assessment, (Alexandria, VA., December 12, 1988) p. 2.

Ocean Freight- Bustamante Port, Kingston, Jamaica

Hundreds of shipping containers of assorted relief supplies arrived in Jamaica via sea freight from east coast and south atlantic ports, and in particular from Miami. Numerous steamship companies donated containers for loading the cargo and free ocean transport to the port of Kingston. As of the first week of December, 1988, port authority officials in Kingston were able to document handling 281 containers of relief cargo, of which 165 had been cleared by customs. Although management officials of several shipping companies (Sealink, Kirk Lines, International Shipping, Ltd) complained a great deal about the unusual mix of commodities, the poor packing of boxes, the lack of proper inventory documentation, and boxes not labeled, the containers nevertheless continued to be shipped as quickly as possible.¹⁹

In Jamaica port authorities seemed ill prepared to manage the enormous influx of relief cargo. Compounding the problem was a serious lack of coordination between port authorities, the government of Jamaica, and port of lading officials in the U.S. During the first several weeks after relief cargoes began arriving no security was provided to prevent pilferage of the cargoes. In addition, and despite the large amount of cargo arriving, it was not until December 1 that customs agreed to extend working hours beyond their normal 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. shift.

In short, the entire operation of unloading and releasing relief cargoes at Kingston port was characterized and plagued by lack of preparedness, cooperation, and coordination, at every step of the process. The port authorities seemed resentful that they were being expected to work overtime and at reduced rates to handle miscellaneous cargoes that were of questionable value, not well documented and poorly packed. In essence, what had originated as a badly organized collection of inappropriate relief supplies in Miami became a problem that was put on a ship and transferred to the port of Kingston. This is not an efficient way to manage a relief operation.

Time required for Donations to Arrive

A key factor to consider when sending relief supplies is the amount of time required for shipping, handling, and customs clearances. Three months after Hurricane Gilbert, containers of miscellaneous relief supplies were still arriving at the port. One must calculate if the items being shipped will still be

¹⁹ Burke, Tom, Report on Bustamante Port, (Miami, Florida, December, 1988), pp. 1-2.

needed by the time they arrive. If goods are brought into a country by sea they should never be expected to clear the port faster than two to three weeks- and one must be cognizant of the fact that significantly more time than this may be required.

Three months after the hurricane one large relief organization received three containers of bottled water. The shipment may have been useful had it arrived the first week after the disaster but three months later it was clearly not needed. The shipment of water weighed 200,000 lbs. and cost \$2,500 for local transport from the wharf. The money required to transport the water from the docks could have been better used to locally purchase needed rehabilitation materials.

In-Country Distribution of Donations

In order for in-kind donations to be effectively distributed it is essential that there be an arrangement with a local organization prior to the shipment of goods to the disaster stricken country. (As discussed earlier, Denton Amendment shipments were subject to such a requirement and this greatly contributed to both quality control and distribution assurances: the cargoes shipped via sea freight were not subject to any similar stipulations.) To distribute relief cargo, an organization must have credibility and be pre-disaster operational within the country. This is necessary both to facilitate clearing goods through customs, and to guarantee the availability of the personnel and financial resources required to distribute supplies. Sending miscellaneous boxes of goods to "Jamaica" in no way insures that needed goods will reach the intended beneficiaries.

The massive amounts of goods that were hurriedly shipped to Jamaica following the hurricane very quickly began to cause problems at the port. The attitude on the part of many in the U.S. was that all a successful relief operation needed was to have an abundance of supplies arrive in Jamaica as quickly as possible. The idea that there should be an urgency in getting goods into the country quickly was reinforced by the media's coverage of victims not receiving aid, and by phone calls to relatives who stated that no relief had reached their particular town.

"In Jamaica, the handling of gifts other than government to government aid was undertaken by private voluntary organizations such as the Red Cross as well as a newly formed inter-church body called Project Accord. With its wide network of churches this body was well suited for the role. However, it had to grapple with the problems attendant to its lack of experience and the

volume of need, and consequently, had a number of obstacles to overcome. Nevertheless, the shared efforts of these organizations went a far way in helping to provide needed assistance to many.

"Many, however, complained of inadequate assistance, especially in rural areas. In some cases, this was a function of dislocation in transport and communications. In others it was the consequence of a relief machinery stretched beyond its limits. Many complained to TV cameras and to relatives in the U.S.

"There was therefore a new problem, one of perception. Stories of goods backed up in warehouses caused many irate donors to complain, stories of unreached victims spawned criticisms of the relief process, complaints of specifically targeted goods not reaching intended recipients caused many to complain. Correcting, clarifying and countering exaggerated or erroneous stories, provided [the Jamaican government] another distraction from other pressing matters."²⁰

Goods were able to be distributed efficiently only by organizations that had pre-disaster country-wide programs in place. In Jamaica these groups were the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the government of Jamaica, USAID, and various churches. Even when distribution efforts were planned and undertaken by capable organizations there were still inherent difficulties due to storm damaged communications and transportation infrastructure.

Competition for Limited Local Transport

The amount of relief goods that arrived in Kingston exceeded the amount of transportation that was immediately available to distribute those items. As relief containers began piling up at the wharf competition for available transport became keen. Even three months after the hurricane groups were reporting difficulties distributing relief items because of lack of available/affordable transport. Of all the relief organizations distributing supplies, only the Salvation Army and the Red Cross had adequate vehicles for distributing relief items.

²⁰ McCook, Wayne, Presentation to National Hurricane Conference, Post Disaster Voluntary Aid- How to Avoid Making a Bad Situation Worse, (Embassy of Jamaica, Washington, D.C., March, 1989) p. 4.

Organizations that received unsolicited donations were forced to allocate (or attempt to secure) funding to transport those items. If adequate funding could not be secured the goods either sat in storage or were distributed to closer, less costly, distribution points. Organizations often had to divert funds from other program budgets to cover the costs of distributing relief supplies.

Cost of Donations to the Recipient Country

There was a high monetary cost to the government of Jamaica for receiving unsolicited donations. The costs incurred in managing the distribution of unsolicited supplies were; unloading fees at the port, transportation from the port to warehouses, and staff hired to sort, repack, and distribute the donations. There was also a cost for transporting the goods from the Kingston warehouses to the distribution points in rural areas but these costs would have been incurred even had goods been purchased locally.

The cost of transporting one shipload of supplies to a warehouse in Kingston was U.S. \$4,000. One C-5A aircraft cost U.S. \$1,700 to unload, although in the first month after the hurricane relief supplies were given a discount rate of U.S. \$420. The Jamaican Salvation Army said they spent over U.S. \$25,000 in distribution costs even though they own trucks and have permanent staff drivers. Smaller organizations' finances were quickly depleted under the requirements of paying for transport of relief items. However, most of the distribution organizations were able to receive some funding from USAID/Jamaica and other sources to help support transportation costs.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL RESOURCE COORDINATION RESPONSE TO A SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTER

The following general recommendations were derived from examining the lessons learned from Hurricane Gilbert/Jamaica relief operations. Most aspects of the relief response to Hurricane Gilbert were competently and effectively managed. Nevertheless, there still remains significant opportunities for improvements.

Confirm that there is a need for the commodity being shipped.

Do not make assumptions about what the needs of the disaster victims are. Exactly what is needed by disaster victims can be confirmed by checking with a relief organization that has personnel working on-site at the disaster. Determine what is needed and do not send what is not needed. Unneeded items compete with priority relief items for the same transportation.

Organizations that accept in-kind relief donations can help this process by clearly communicating specifically what items are needed as well as clearly stating what items are not needed. If clothing is not needed someone had better tell this to the media as quickly as possible and should do so with appropriate emphasis. The public finds out about disasters from the media, therefore the media is the logical avenue for communicating to the U.S. public common misconceptions that surround international disaster relief.

If an entire country has been affected and large scale food distribution becomes necessary, PVOs can play an important role in using their local expertise to distribute supplies. This needs to be closely coordinated with, and supportive of, government actions. In most disasters it may be more appropriate for PVOs to concentrate on the long-term rehabilitation needs of the disaster victims while massive first response efforts are probably best handled by governments and multilateral organizations.

For reasons of credibility, logistics management, and donor liaison it is extremely important that PVOs be able to document, as specifically as possible, all supplies shipped and distributed. Governments, including USAID, are not impressed by organizations that are not able to say what has been shipped and where it has been distributed. Failure to maintain strict logistical accountability can cripple a PVOs chances of receiving post-disaster rehabilitation grants from donor agencies.

Another important reason to keep careful shipping/inventory records is to be able to monitor the progress of distribution and compare the amount of supplies in the pipeline against the total needs. This enables a procurement officer to stop orders when sufficient quantities have been ordered/programmed and to suspend shipments if lack of cooperation by local authorities is preventing the supplies from reaching the intended beneficiaries.

Allocate relief items only to organizations that have the ability to transport the supplies to the affected country.

Immediately after a disaster many organizations will spontaneously begin collecting miscellaneous items for use in

disaster relief. However, at the time that these collections are begun, many of these organizations will not have thought about to whom, or how, the items will be transported. It is not unusual for community and civic groups to have already collected several thousands pounds of relief supplies only to find that; they do not know who to send the supplies to, that they do not have confirmed transportation options for shipping the goods, and that they do not have enough money to pay commercial rates for transporting the goods. Never assume that unsolicited relief supplies will be transported free of charge.

The kinds of commodities that are traditionally sent by the U.S. public as disaster relief supplies, such as food, clothing, and medical supplies, are best able to be handled by the affected country one to two weeks after the disaster has occurred. Therefore, the Denton Amendment is a viable mechanism for transporting goods, as well as assuring their distribution, once the immediate effects of the disaster are known and the needs and supply distribution channels have been identified.

Private donations often arrive unsorted, unlabeled and poorly packaged. However, the Denton Amendment program requires that a complete inventory must accompany and precede the shipment. Denton Amendment shipments are required to be clearly marked with the donor's and consignee's name and address before the cargo will be shipped.

The Denton Amendment was used quite effectively as a means for transporting and assuring distribution of privately donated relief supplies. Based on an assessment of disaster relief supplies sent to Jamaica via the Denton Amendment the following are recommendations for using the program to transport disaster relief supplies:

1. a rapid approval process should be initiated for transporting relief supplies via the Denton Amendment- (and done in a time frame so that unsolicited donations begin to arrive only after priority goods have been delivered). In order to facilitate this process an in-country manager/ liaison officer should be appointed by the local USAID mission;
2. there should be specific requirements regarding labeling cargoes and providing inventory lists. The inventory list should accompany the cargoes and also be forwarded ahead to both the in-country Denton Amendment Officer and the consignee;
3. Absolutely no cargo should be shipped unless there is an identified and capable in-country consignee. The consignee's transportation and distribution

capabilities should be determined by the appointed in-country Denton Amendment Officer.

Unconsigned relief items should not be sent to a disaster affected country.

Commercial air carriers and shipping lines should also be encouraged to adopt Denton Amendment type regulations as criteria for shipping relief supplies. Unconsigned relief supplies should not be shipped to a disaster affected country. If the item is truly needed it will not be difficult to find an organization to consign it to. By having criteria for the acceptance of supplies it will be much easier for freight forwarders to refuse shipment of unsolicited items, or at least slow down the flow of those items until priority supplies have been delivered.

It is now the standard operating procedure of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, that when a large disaster occurs each governor's office receives a letter explaining the government's policy regarding transporting private relief supplies (the policy is that the U.S. government does not transport private relief supplies). A similar procedure should be adopted concerning those companies that are likely to ship unsolicited relief supplies free of charge. When a disaster occurs, the major sea freight companies, port authorities (particularly Miami), the affected country's national airline, and other major airlines flying to the affected country should all be sent a letter explaining the problems of miscellaneous relief supplies and encouraging them to transport only those cargoes that are in compliance with Denton Amendment regulations.

Large PVOs should consider taking a proactive, rather than a strictly responsive approach to soliciting cooperative arrangements with airlines prior to the occurrence of a disaster. PVOs should be able to arrange to take advantage of the initial generosity of commercial airlines and have prepackaged relief supplies available for immediate air shipment. Such packages could include plastic sheeting, water purification tablets, generators, rope, basic medicines and first aid equipment. In fact, World Vision Relief and Development organization now stocks "fly-away kits" for such a purpose. Although the packages themselves might provide only very limited assistance they serve to enable a PVO to execute at least a limited intervention and to establish credibility with the host government and major donor organizations.

Distributing relief supplies requires personnel and financial resources within the affected country. To distribute commodities people are needed to sort and repack items and trucks will be needed for distribution. If the distributing organization does

not own trucks then trucks will have to be hired. All of this requires a commitment of both time and money for a period of at least one to two months.

All relief supplies must be of high quality, well packed, and clearly labeled in both English and the language of the affected country.

Items that are not well packed and clearly labeled must always be sorted and repacked by the recipient organizations. Organizations need to pay to have this done because the volume of goods is so overwhelming that volunteers lose interest after the first few days. Donated goods should be packed in small boxes that can be easily managed. The boxes must be well labeled so that it does not become necessary to open each box that arrives. It is best if two envelopes with specific content lists are taped to the side of each box sent. This allows anyone interested, including customs officials and relief workers, to quickly determine what the box contains without actually having to open it.

Clothing donations, if requested, should be packed in separate boxes according to the categories of men's, women's, and children's and should never be randomly mixed. Only new clothing should be sent. Before donating food it should be confirmed that the item is a familiar part of the beneficiary's diet. It should also be noted that clothing is more difficult to distribute than food. Although the same meal packets can be given out to all, clothes must be of the proper gender type as well as the right size to be useful.

When planning to distribute relief supplies, it is best to use already existing distribution channels rather than create new ones. The government of Jamaica successfully used commercial channels to distribute roofing materials after Hurricane Gilbert and large quantities of food were distributed through church networks. Both of these methods made use of existing institutional channels and both worked well.

Needed relief supplies that can be purchased locally should not be shipped to a disaster affected country, particularly if the cost of the shipment exceeds the value of the commodities.

It can take many years for an economy to recover from a disaster. Although the housing sector may be quickly rehabilitated, agricultural and manufacturing rehabilitation can take several years. For a community to return to its pre-disaster level of economic activity income levels need to be returned to their prior levels. This process can be assisted by relief organizations that choose to purchase relief and rehabilitation

materials locally, to the extent possible, rather than relying exclusively on the use of imported supplies. Money spent on transportation costs may often have a more beneficial long term impact if spent locally on rehabilitation activities.

Monetary donations are the most useful form of public assistance.

A financial contribution allows professional relief organizations to purchase exactly what is most urgently needed by disaster victims and to pay for the transportation necessary to locally distribute those supplies. Unlike in-kind donations, cash donations entail no transport cost.

In addition, cash donations allow relief supplies to be purchased at locations as near to the disaster site as possible. Supplies, and particularly food, can often be purchased locally. This has the double advantage of stimulating local economies (providing employment), and insuring that the supplies will arrive as quickly as possible.

The media plays the powerful role of informing the public about disasters and in disbursing information about the needs of the affected population. Relief organizations need to make a greater effort to inform the media about the management and stages of a relief intervention. There should be more of an emphasis on the importance of long term economic rehabilitation rather than thinking of a relief process only in terms of the immediate needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Jamaica's largest earner of foreign exchange is tourism. Because of the heavy media focus on massive destruction millions of tourist dollars were lost as vacation reservations were cancelled. The images of massive destruction prompted the public to react in the only way the knew how- by sending items of marginal utility. Instead of tourist dollars Jamaica got used clothing. The public wants to help but no one has taken the time to explain to them how they can best do this.

Professional relief organizations are clearly not getting the message to the public concerning what constitutes an appropriate disaster response. It is important that PVOs begin to be more candid with the public about the problems associated with the use of unsolicited donations. Public assistance for disaster relief is useful only if properly directed. There is some risk that donors may be offended by organizations' apparent callousness, and may become reluctant to continue to support PVO programs, but the alternative is future relief operations that continue to be plagued with the problems of the past. It is time to implement the learnings of the past and begin to build a more beneficial and professional sudden-onset disaster response capability.

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