

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

How To Give So It Helps—Not Hurts

by Suzanne Brooks, director of the Center for International Disaster Information

(NAPSA)—As a nation, Americans are very generous. After the tsunami in Asia, there was a tremendous outpouring of kind-hearted donations for victims and their families.

Wanting to help people in need is a good thing but some of the donations were misguided. For example, people donated parkas, when there's no need for parkas in southwest Asia.

Though well-intended, say experts at the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI), collections of clothing often include items that are inappropriate for the climate and special cultural and religious considerations must be taken into account when sending food. Most recipients have no way to distribute items once they reach those affected by the disaster.

The CIDI aims to help Americans make the best and most effective donations. To help define what's appropriate, the CIDI offers answers to some commonly asked donation questions:

Q: What is the best way to help victims following an international disaster?

A: Cash donations are the best way to offer help.

Q: Why cash?



You can make your donation dollars count by spending the money in a way that's most helpful.

A: Cash works best for three reasons. 1. Financial contributions are the best way to meet specific and immediate needs. 2. Cash donations allow purchases to be made at bulk discount, at a lower transportation cost and with American dollars which generally go farther overseas. 3. Cash donations go directly to the disaster site, allowing for exact purchases of what is needed most urgently.

Q: What about donating commodities to disaster victims?

A: One of the greatest misconceptions about international disaster relief is that used clothing, foods and bottled water are urgently needed after a foreign disaster. In most cases, donations of canned goods are not appropriate, while the collection of bottled water is highly inefficient. It's important to have an accurate analysis of need before determin-

ing response.

Q: What if we have already collected donations?

A: Hold a fund-raiser and send the cash.

Q: What kinds of fund-raising do you suggest?

A: There are hundreds of ways to raise funds. Some of the best include organizing a walk for the victims, having a food festival or bake sale, holding an educational discussion or lecture, holding an artwork auction or having a race.

Q: Can I receive a tax deduction for my cash donation?

A: Not all donations are tax deductible. Be sure to check with the agency to which you make your donation. For details on tax-exempt, tax-deductible status and other issues related to donations and charitable organizations, visit www.give.org.

Q: Once funds are collected, who should I contact?

A: CIDI encourages groups to make financial contributions through one of many InterAction members involved in specific relief activities found at www.interaction.org. Each associated organization undergoes a rigorous financial and policy review.

For more information about international disasters, emergency or fund-raising, visit www.cidi.org or call CIDI at 703-276-2942.