

Grantmakers can be more effective and strategic in addressing disasters by following **eight principles of good disaster management**. The following is an excerpt from *Disaster Grantmaking: A Practical Guide for Foundations and Corporations* (pub. Council on Foundations and European Foundation Centre) available from Philanthropy Australia Knowledge Centre or at: http://www.cof.org/files/Documents/International_Programs/disasterguide.pdf

1. **First, do no harm.**

Not all disaster assistance is beneficial. Inappropriate items can overwhelm limited transportation, storage and distribution capacities, thereby delaying the delivery of assistance that is desperately needed. Aim to ensure that your grant contributes to the solution and not to the problem.

2. **Stop, look and listen before taking action.**

Information is the key to good disaster grantmaking. Every disaster has unique characteristics. Take the time to learn about the specifics of a disaster before deciding how to respond.

3. **Don't act in isolation.**

Coordination among disaster grantmakers, among NGOs operating on the ground, and between these two groups can reduce duplication of effort, make efficient use of resources and ensure that the highest-priority needs are addressed first. Grantmakers can participate in various standing and ad hoc fora - both real and virtual - where needs are discussed, information is exchanged and assistance is coordinated.

4. **Think beyond the immediate crisis to the long term.**

The emergency phase of a disaster attracts most of the attention and resources. Grantmakers can play a very useful role before the crisis by supporting disaster prevention and preparedness activities and afterward by filling gaps between emergency relief and long-term development programs.

5. **Bear in mind the expertise of local organizations.**

Community-based organizations and NGOs with a local presence are the first on the scene when disasters occur. They know best what assistance is needed and they understand the complex political, social and cultural context of a disaster. However, these organizations are often hampered by lack of resources and organizational capacity to carry out their important role. Working with and/or supporting these organizations can prove mutually beneficial.

6. **Find out how prospective grantees operate.**

Organizations that work on disasters vary greatly in their approach and overall philosophy. Some specialize only in emergency relief while others have a long-term development orientation. Some support the work of local organizations while others do not. It is wise to know what approach you are supporting before making a grant.

7. **Be accountable to those you are trying to help.**

Grantmakers should be accountable not only to their donors, boards and shareholders, but also to the people they seek to assist. Grantmakers need to go beyond merely determining how their grant was spent to engage their grantees in a process that assesses social impact.

8. **Communicate your work and use it as an educational tool.**

Highlighting examples of good disaster grantmaking is an excellent way for grantmakers to educate both internal and external audiences about the disaster process. It is useful to build a knowledge base, capture lessons learned and share your experience with boards, staff, employees, other grantmakers, the media, community groups, public officials and international organizations.