



## INFORMATION SHEET

### OVERSEAS EMERGENCIES AND PUBLIC DONATIONS

---

#### **Overview**

This information sheet relates to financial and non-financial (or gifts in-kind) donations offered in response to international emergencies and related emergency appeals (see the glossary of terms below). It examines current best-practice approaches by the NGO sector to manage public donations and provides guidelines on effective ways the Australian community can assist in overseas emergencies.

ACFID recognises the strong commitment of the Australian community to provide assistance to overseas emergencies. The generosity of the Australian public to provide financial and non-financial donations is highly regarded and greatly appreciated by the Australian overseas aid sector.

#### **Guidelines on Australian agency approaches**

In most circumstances, the Australian overseas aid sector prefers financial donations rather than non-financial (or gifts in-kind) donations from the Australian community. Due to the current operational environment, Australian aid agencies are unable to resource the storage and transportation of the majority of in-kind donations and gifts received.

Guidelines on the intent and use of donations and gifts are dependant on the recommendation of individual agencies. Exceptions can include (but are not exclusive to):

1. Individual agency policies stipulating that the intent and use of donations or gifts can be altered. For example, aid agencies can choose to accept in-kind logistical support such as specialist assistance, navigation systems, etc.
2. Donations or gifts that are an explicit focus of an appeal/aid project.

#### **Guidelines on how the Australian community can help**

##### **Financial support**

The best and most versatile way of helping communities overseas is through a cash donation to a relief, development or refugee support organisation. In this way, funds can be allocated according to need, e.g. to purchase goods locally, support leaders and communities, or provide life saving relief such as medicine or food.

##### *Five reasons why cash is best*

1. Cash allows disaster relief professionals to procure exactly what is needed in a disaster situation.
2. Cash is the most efficient donation because it does not use up scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space and because it can be transferred very quickly.
3. Cash donations do not require transportation costs, which can outweigh the value of materials donated.
4. Cash supports the economy of the disaster-stricken region.
5. Cash donations prevent culturally, dietary, and environmentally inappropriate giving.

## OVERSEAS EMERGENCIES AND PUBLIC DONATIONS (cont.)

---

### **Raising funds on behalf of an Australian charity**

Community groups and individuals wishing to organise an event or activity to raise funds to contribute to an Australian charity's response (otherwise called third party fundraising) should:

1. identify an appropriate organisation to send funds to that is a [signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct](#), and
2. contact the organisation to get authorisation and information about correct procedures for receipting and banking of funds raised.

### **Non-cash donations**

It is important to never assume that relief goods will be transported by any organisation, including the Australian Defence Force. **Before** collecting and sending any non-cash donations you must confirm that the organisation is willing to accept, transport and distribute the goods.

*Goods:* Donations of food, toys, clothing or blankets are generally not needed after a crisis and unless specifically requested by an organisation responding to a disaster situation, should not be collected or sent.

*Food:* In most disasters food scarcity is not an immediate problem, although distribution networks are frequently disrupted. If food is requested, donated foodstuffs must be non-perishable, appropriate to the local culture, and clearly labelled. (**Note:** powdered milk in lactose intolerant populations with no access to clean water is a formula for increased child fatalities.)

*Medicines:* Donations of medicines (other than commercial quantities) are not collected and sent except via authorised organisations. Medical supplies are highly specialised commodities that must be distributed in an effective and timely way. Medicine donations must be based on World Health Organization and Red Cross standards and coordinated by experienced relief organisations. They must have a shelf life of at least 12 months after arriving in the country and old prescription medicines should never be sent.

*Volunteering:* Volunteering in a developing country is a way of contributing your skills and knowledge to a community. Information and useful links about volunteering are available at [Volunteering](#).

### **Glossary of terms**

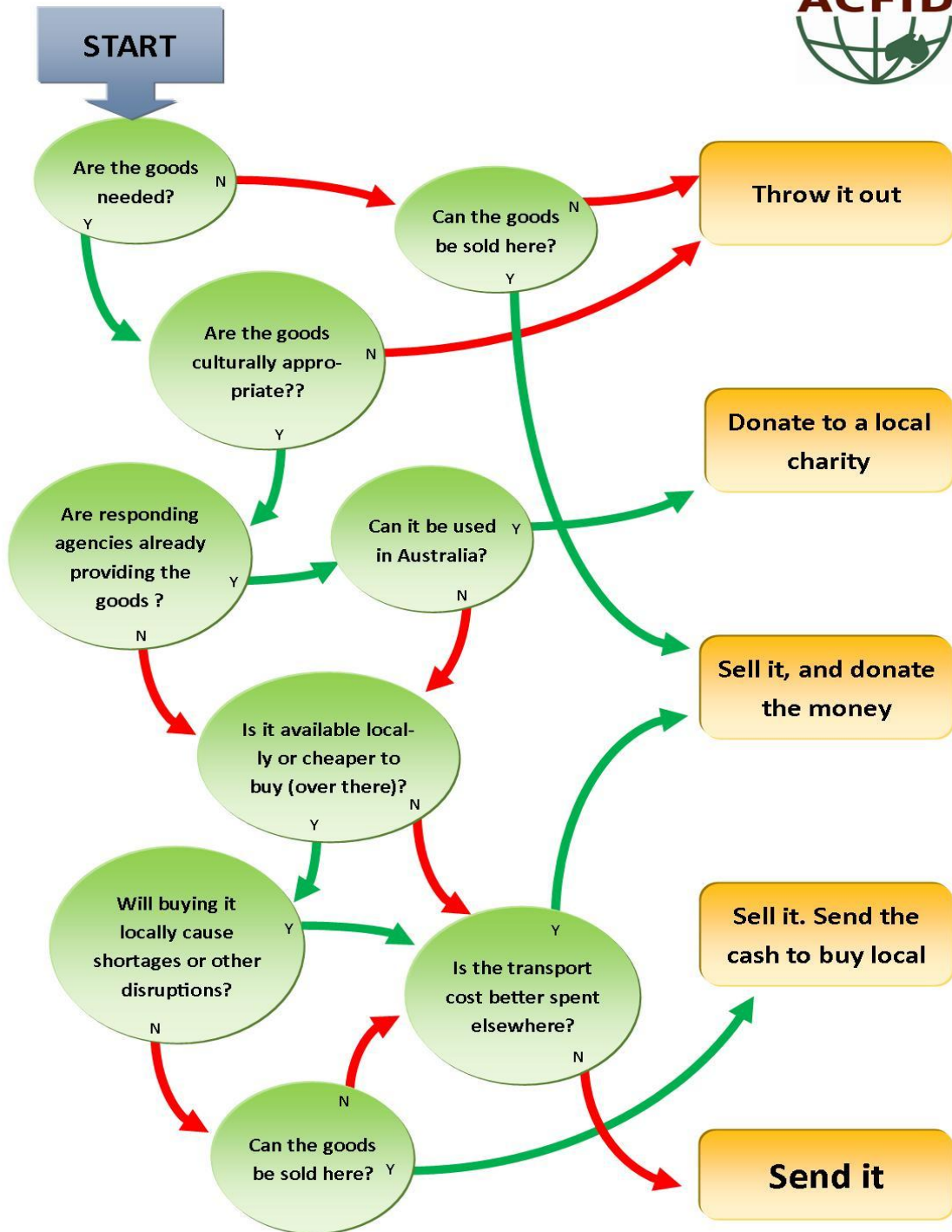
- *In-kind donations or gifts:* Non-monetary donations or gifts that are free of charge (or without providing consideration in return) and include all donations and gifts that are received.
- *Intent and use of donations policy:* Aid agency policy guidelines stipulating the intended use of donations and/or gifts. Please refer to the ACFID Code of Conduct section 5, which relates to finances, donations and excess donation/funds policy.

### **References that guide best practice:**

- ACFID Code of Conduct section 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5.
- [InterAction: How to Help](#)

*Contact: Fiona McAlister, Humanitarian Coordinator and Policy Advisor:*  
[fmcaster@acfid.asn.au](mailto:fmcaster@acfid.asn.au)

# Should I send non-financial donations to an emergency?



Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)  
 14 Napier Close Deakin ACT 2600 | Tel +61 2 6285 1816 | Fax +61 2 6285 1720