

# Crisis Response

A humanitarian crisis may strike in a heartbeat. In a few minutes a powerful earthquake may destroy homes, public buildings, roads and communication lines. People are left wounded, vulnerable and confused. Slow onset emergencies, in contrast, leave warning signs over several weeks or months. A prolonged drought becomes a crisis at the end of a crop cycle when harvests are meager and families sell productive assets in order to survive. In a time of emergency, victims often turn to the church for assistance and assurance that they are neither abandoned by God nor by his people. CBM's emergency relief fund works through local church partners to provide immediate assistance and to help families in the difficult process of rebuilding their lives.



There are three broad categories of humanitarian disasters. Each represents a deadly crisis for large numbers of people:

1. A natural disaster is usually caused by extreme weather, seismic activity, or volcanic eruptions. The word "natural" may be misleading. The growing levels of hydro carbons in the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels are a major factor in climate change. Deforestation frequently increases the damage caused by heavy rains.
2. Disasters caused by humans include the majority of transportation calamities, fires and industrial accidents. Exhausting underground water supplies through over-extraction, terrorist acts and conflicts can also be classified as man-made disasters.
3. Complex emergencies arise when a series of events place the lives of people at risk. Such incidents might include natural disasters, ethnic violence and the breakdown of civil authority. Many of the global crises of the past two decades have developed into this category.

There are two broad phases to a crisis. Phase 1 is concerned with assessing the dimensions of the crisis and acting to preserve lives. Phase 2 assists people to re-establish their homes, communities, occupations and security. CBM works in both phases of a crisis. Short-term mission participants are frequently involved in Phase 2 crisis response initiatives.

## RESPONDING IN A CRISIS:

Timely and appropriate assistance saves lives during Phase 1 of a major crisis. The elements of a response program include:

1. Provision of security and safety for vulnerable populations.
2. Meeting basic nutritional needs through food assistance or feeding programs.
3. Provision of clean water and adequate sanitation facilities. Personal hygiene, satisfactory sanitation facilities, uncontaminated water and safe disposal of waste are important for preventing outbreaks of infectious diseases.
4. Providing temporary dwellings for individual households. Individual dwellings are preferable to collective shelter in public buildings.

## SECTOR STANDARDS

The Sector Standards provide principles and direction for organizations involved in humanitarian emergencies. A number of the Sphere Standards are listed below:

- The primary responsibility of aid workers is to protect affected populations from physical danger and coercion
- Aid workers will consult with affected people and engage them in project management.
- Crisis assistance will be given without distinction of race, religion or nationality
- Aid programs will seek to strengthen local organizations and capacities
- Safe water will be provided at a minimum level of 15 litres per person per day
- Affected people will be able to access water within 500 meters of their dwellings and line-ups are not to exceed 30 minutes
- Separate toilet and sanitation facilities will be built for women and men
- Food assistance will be provided at a minimum level of 2,100 kcals per day
- Food will be appropriate for the dietary preferences of the culture
- Special attention will be given to nursing mothers, pregnant women and undernourished children
- Temporary shelters will offer a minimum covered space of 3.5 square meters per person.
- Clothing will be appropriate to the climate and the culture
- A primary health care unit will be established for each group of 10,000 affected people
- Reproductive health services will be made available for women

5. Supplying non-food items such as clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, water storage containers and sanitary supplies to displaced persons
6. Tending to injuries and infectious illnesses. Special facilities are required for pregnant women and children.
7. Attending to trauma and emerging mental health issues.
8. Providing children with safe spaces, structures and opportunities to communicate their fears and sense of dislocation.

One of the basic principles of crisis response is to consult with various people within the local population who are able to provide guidance on culturally appropriate food choices, clothing, gender relations, and power structures.

### **CBM's COMMITMENT TO CRISIS RESPONSE**

People often look to the church in a time of crisis. CBM and its partners work in coordination with other international and national organizations in Phase 1 and Phase 2 crisis response projects. The following list is a partial record of the humanitarian disasters to which Canadian Baptist churches and individuals have responded by means of CBM and its partners.

- Asian Tsunami (2004): A major housing program in Indonesia and community assistance in India.
- Hurricane Katrina (2005): Support provided through American Baptist relief program. Volunteer teams assisted in rebuilding homes.
- East Africa Drought (2006): Food aid for over 40,000 people for one year.
- Haiti Earthquake (2010): Immediate Phase 1 response. Subsequent commitment to rebuilding homes with volunteers.
- Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan (2011): Emergency assistance through the Japanese Baptists.
- East Africa Drought (2012): Food assistance in North Eastern Province of Kenya. Ongoing water and agriculture projects.
- Sahel Drought (2013): Food assistance through Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners and well digging through SIM.
- Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines (2013): Immediate food assistance. Ongoing support to multiple partners for rebuilding of homes and institutions.
- Syria Refugees and IDPs (2013-2014): Food, medical and spiritual assistance in Syria and Lebanon to over 40,000 people.
- South Sudan Crisis (2014): Nutritional support and non-food items for 1160 internally displaced families.

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In the event a particular project or program is oversubscribed or where local conditions prevent implementation, CBM will redirect your donation to where it is needed most.

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through word & deed*