



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > [Helping survivors of earthquake in Haiti \(and other natural disasters\)](#)

Helping survivors of earthquake in Haiti (and other natural disasters) ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What can I do to help survivors of the earthquake in Haiti (and other natural disasters)?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's great that you want to help those affected by the Haiti earthquake. With natural disasters happening around the world, there's ongoing need for support. Whatever you may have to give, there are opportunities for you to assist others. The most effective way to help is by donating money, but it's a good idea to do some research to ensure your money is going directly to those in need through a reputable organization.

Generally speaking, relief organizations rely on donations to address emergency response, to continue functioning after the emergency has subsided and to provide ongoing medical and humanitarian services. Donating money is the most effective way of helping after a natural disaster. Other donations usually incur more costs and impedes opportunities for the local economy to recover, as many of the donated items can be purchased locally. For example, the cost of transporting or storing donated items may exceed the cost of the items that were donated. Cash is also helpful because it can be used immediately and for the changing needs of the area impacted. There are a number of ways to donate and a number of relief organizations to support.

If you do choose to donate money, it's recommended that you partner with charities with which you're familiar. It's best to be wary of organizations with names that are similar to bigger, more reputable organizations, as well as those charities that appeared immediately following the disaster. Scammers may also rush you into a donation, thank you for a donation you never made, not give specifics about the use of your donation, or offer a chance to win something in exchange for a donation. Keeping all that in mind, it might be worth doing some research before offering support. Websites such as [Charity Navigator](#) ^[2] and [CharityWatch](#) ^[3] can help you evaluate charity organizations. If there's a specific cause that's a priority for you, CharityWatch also has a [Hot Topics](#) ^[4] section where you can view current events in need of donations. Within

the listing of these events is a directory of charities that are working on that specific cause, along with their CharityWatch rating. This tool may help you determine to which organizations you would like to donate, if any. You can also check out the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) [Tax Exempt Organization Search](#) [5] to see if your donation would be tax-deductible. If there's an option to, it's recommended that donations be made directly through an organization's website — crowdfunding websites, online giving portals, and text-to-donate campaigns may seem like an easier way to give, but there's usually a delay in the charity receiving the funds.

Monetary donations aren't the only way to support relief efforts. During a crisis there's often an increased need for blood. Organizations often set up blood drives to help increase the supply, so you may want to inquire about these events. You may also consider going to the [Red Cross Blood Services](#) [6] site to find a place to donate.

In addition to non-governmental organizations, the United States government has two agencies that specifically address areas affected by natural disasters: the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) [7] and the [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) [8]. FEMA addresses domestic emergencies and is primarily responsible for coordinating disaster responses after a state governor declares a state of emergency. If you're interested in learning more about disaster preparedness, FEMA offers [training](#) [9] to build skills for dealing with future crisis events. USAID addresses international emergencies, in addition to offering long-term aid in 80 countries worldwide. USAID offers longer term support including psychosocial care to traumatized disaster survivors and working with local governments to promote economic growth. Both of these organizations provide much needed resources to areas impacted by natural disasters. However, it's not always clear how long they're able to provide these resources. It's also worth noting that the recovery efforts in disaster zones last beyond media coverage of the event and support from FEMA and USAID. In the months and years following a natural disaster, there's still a need for resources. Checking in with organizations months after the disaster occurs may highlight more specific needs in that area.

Helping out in the aftermath of disaster is meaningful, and any support you consider giving is likely to make an impact for the benefit of those in need. Being engaged immediately after a disaster and in the months after will allow you to provide the most impactful support during the recovery efforts.

Here's to all the help you hope to give!

Alice!

Category:

[General Health](#) [10]

[Miscellaneous](#) [11]

Related questions

[Displaced by hurricane — Settling into my new home?](#) [12]

[Getting in touch during an emergency](#) [13]

[Health information online: Whom can you trust?](#) [14]

Published date:

Jan 15, 2010

Last reviewed on:

Dec 07, 2018

Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
 - Content Use
 - Media Inquiries
 - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
 - Licensing Q&As
 - Get Alice! on Your Website
 - Full Site Syndication
 - Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/helping-survivors-earthquake-haiti-and-other-natural-disasters>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/helping-survivors-earthquake-haiti-and-other-natural-disasters>
- [2] <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>
- [3] <https://www.charitywatch.org/home>
- [4] <https://www.charitywatch.org/charitywatch-hot-topics>
- [5] <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search>
- [6] <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>
- [7] <http://www.fema.gov/>
- [8] <http://www.usaid.gov/>
- [9] <https://training.fema.gov/>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/general-health>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/miscellaneous-1>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/displaced-hurricane-%E2%80%94-settling-my-new-home-0>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/getting-touch-during-emergency-0>
- [14] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/health-information-online-whom-can-you-trust>