

Responding to World Disasters



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Introduction

We are all faced – sometimes it seems on a daily basis – with the need to respond to natural disasters, such as famine, or the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, or matters of peace and war.

The immediate response is to want to do something to help our fellow human beings. Often, time is pressing with the needs of the people involved being literally a matter of life or death.

Individuals will want to respond in the best way they can but what should Scouting do?

This programme material has been devised to help Leaders in The Scout Association to provide a measured approach to the response to emergencies and disasters - not just when they happen but as part of our balanced programme.

It would be wrong for Scouting to have nothing to do or say. As an educational movement, we all will want to help our Scouts to come to terms with these events and to think about what each may do as an individual to make the world a better place where such events are quickly dealt with or eliminated altogether if possible.

Young people may have been exposed to images on the media which are deeply upsetting, the consequences of which are uncertain. It may be that there are members of the Scout Group who have lost loved ones or who are otherwise closely involved in the tragedy. We should of course be especially careful here. For example:

- be careful not to condemn all those of particular race or cultural or religious background

- arrangements could be made to express sympathy to any families known to us and directly affected by the incident

What to do?

Give money

You can donate money for the benefit of those affected by a disasters, for example to

- Unicef
- Oxfam
- British Red Cross
Disasters Emergency Committee
- Comic Relief Red Nose Day.

Programme Ideas

But Scouting is not a relief agency; our job is to work with young people. Programme items for different age ranges can be planned so as to incorporate them into the meeting in a way you find comfortable. Some ideas are available in the publications listed in this fact sheet. Ideas are also posted on ScoutBase UK – www.scoutbase.org.uk.

Rather than respond to a particular incident, why not have an ongoing programme of suitable activities? This could involve:

- visits
- talks
- involvement in the world family of Scouting
- working towards the International Group Award.

Examples of recent events where Scouting has responded include:

The Scout Information Centre

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