

2010 USAID Summer Seminar Series

August 5: Public Engagement in International Disaster Assistance

Panelists: Ann Kaguyutan, Director of Disaster Fundraising, American Red Cross; Linda Poteat, Director, Disaster Response, Interaction; Sandra Schimmelpfennig, Director of The Charity Rater, LLC and blogger for Good Intentions are Not Enough and the Huffington Post

Moderator: James Fleming, Operations Division Chief, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, USAID

JAMES FLEMING: Good morning, everybody. Thank you for coming this morning to the USAID seminar series. My name is James Fleming. I am the division chief of operations at the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID. I will be your moderator today.

Today's topic is entitled "Public Engagement in International Disaster Assistance." The American public and people from all over the world, in the face of international disasters, have a long history of generosity. People give their money. People give their time. People give their things, and many other things. Some of these donations work out well. Others actually don't help and actually do harm, despite people's best intentions. Few of us have an opportunity to see for ourselves the results of these good intentions. So what we have today is a panel of experts that are going to shed some light on this for all of us. So what we will do is the panelists will give a short introduction of themselves and then give a presentation. We will do all three presentations and then have plenty of time for questions and answers at the end.

So our presenters today are Ann Kaguyutan from the American Red Cross. She is the director of disaster fundraising. Second, Linda Poteat. She is the director of disaster response for Interaction. Third, Sandra Schimmelpfennig. She runs the blog called Good Intentions are Not Enough. So without further ado, we will start with Ann.

ANN KAGUYUTAN: Good morning, everybody. I am Ann Kaguyutan. I am the director of disaster fundraising at the American Red Cross. I have been with the Red Cross for about 13 years, so when I started, I started in the late '90s with Hurricane Mitch, Hurricane Floyd, 9/11 and so on and so forth and all the way up to the Haiti quake, Chile and now Pakistan is what we're responding to. My expertise within the Red Cross is disaster fund raising. So what that means is when a disaster strikes, I'm in charge of coordinating and organizing our fund-raising campaigns for both international and domestic disasters, as well as managing the donations of in-kind products and services.

So I wanted to talk to you today, just sort of give you a baseline understanding of what we do for the Red Cross, or what we do for in-kind donations and what we do during disasters and how we coordinate – how we determine what's right to give and what's not right to give to the Red Cross. As you know – you've probably heard this message – cash is king, cash is best. We always want and look for and seek cash donations, for a number of reasons. It allows us to purchase the items that are really needed, the exact quantities and what we're looking for for a relief operation. It helps us to also get the items quicker to the relief site instead of having to try and find them elsewhere.

If we buy them locally, we can ship them faster and it arrives faster. In addition, it helps stimulate the local economy, if that's appropriate. If we buy something that is, again, locally procured, then we can get the items faster and get them there cheaper and also help stimulate the economy at the same time. Within that cash campaign, we also have to manage the generous offers that people make to us during times of disaster, things like we want to donate canned goods, we want to donate clothing, all those things. We need to make sure that we manage that process well enough. And we also try and seek donations to help provide products to our disaster victims.

So on the front end, we have our proactive solicitations that go out to all of our in-kind donors, our companies to make sure that we try and get items to people, but you also have to manage the unsolicited items that maybe just show up on our doorstep. One thing I did want to sort of give to you, a baseline understanding of what – what does the Red Cross do and what do we take into consideration of what we're looking for when we accept items? So when we look at what we need to provide on a disaster site, we

look at what is the identified need? Because we're there usually right after a disaster, domestically and also internationally at times, we have to look for shovels, rakes, gloves, trash bags, bleach, that type of item for cleanup. We also look for food items – diapers, baby formula, et cetera – but we can't take them in collections; we have to get them in bulk donations, which brings me to my next consideration that we have to look at.

We have to look at bulk donations of products to match specific quantities. We want to make sure that we are providing equitable products and services to everybody that's been affected so that we make sure we don't have an excess and we have stuff that we don't know what to do with at the end of it, or that we only service a small part of the population. So when we do secure these in-kind items, we have to make sure that there is enough for everybody. Packaging is also another consideration. When we go out and approach companies for in-kind bulk items, we have to make sure that they're on pallets, that they're shrink-wrapped and also sorted. We have to make sure that they're ready to go, they're ready to be shipped and transported to the disaster site.

This type of proper packaging helps us ensure that we can get items there as quickly as possible and that relief workers don't spend time trying to go through boxes, sorting items and organizing items. Another consideration that we have to take a look at is the condition of the item. We don't – rarely, rarely, rarely accept items that are used because we can't ensure their quality. And we also never accept donations that are expired or any medications that have been expired as well. And the last thing that we look at that we have to consider is appropriateness of the donation. The Red Cross does not want to provide products that are not familiar to the population that's been impacted by the disaster. We don't want to provide something that's inappropriate or culturally inappropriate or have any religious ramifications. We also want to get food that's been procured locally so that it is something that people are used to eating and it also meets the dietary needs.

We also want to make sure that we gather items that are appropriate for the particular climate. We got a donation just recently for flip flops but it was for American Samoa so it was completely appropriate – that's what they wear – would not be an appropriate donation for New England snowstorms happening in January. So finally, one thing that – so those are the type of things that we have to take into consideration when accepting bulk items. Again, approaching companies, approaching our partners, we do have preset agreements with some big national companies to approach that we know when a disaster hits we can call them on the phone and say, we need X, Y, Z. We have a disaster in the Gulf so we need mosquito repellent because we know it's going to get really sticky and muggy and mosquitoes are going to grow. Some things that we don't take are collections of items and small donations, individual items like used clothing, furniture, canned goods, only because they have to be repackaged, they have to be sorted, cleaned, before distributing. And, again, handling them could take money. Shipping them down to a disaster site will be expensive, and it takes away time of personnel who are working on other aspects of the relief operation.

So what can we do besides give stuff – items and stuff? I'm a fund raiser, so I go out and ask for money, so I want to talk to you today a little bit about not just donating, making a direct donation, but what else can you do? Go out and raise money. Do collections amongst your friends. Fundraising websites are very popular. Create awareness amongst your social networks. I know we have a blogger here so she can talk about that as well. Participate in any workplace giving campaigns. A lot of times companies will match gifts, so that's another opportunity to get involved without you having to send items in as well. And participate in any local community fundraisers that are going on. I know during Haiti and also some larger disasters that we've faced, we also participated in Dining Out for America, where you'd go to a restaurant and 10 percent or 20 percent of your meal would go to an organization. So one thing I just wanted to end on was, using Haiti as an example for in-kind donations, we received probably over a thousand offers of in-kind support. That's just people, companies calling us with just wanting to give anything and everything. We were only able to accept about 20 of those offers. And those offers that we accepted were really related to transportation, getting some of our relief items down to Haiti; communication needs, laptops, that sort of thing; generators to help supply some of our – supply power to our base camps.

So those are the type of big, large bulk items that we typically try and look for for international disasters. Some of the things that came to our offices in D.C. during Haiti that we had to find out what to do with and find a way to move them on was just boxes of stuff. We got a number of boxes that contained used shoes, boots, canned goods, spaghetti boxes with the spaghetti broken everywhere, various medical supplies, playing cards, Frisbees. Another box had Santa Claus hats and reindeer hats. So it was very interesting in the type of items that you see that people collect. Again, very generous but also misguided. We actually had to call up our friends and Salvation Army and Goodwill to see, can you take any of these items? Of course, we called the donors back who sent us those items and told them we couldn't use them and nor could we ship them to Haiti. But, again, it's just sort of a one-person education at a time. Thank you.

LINDA POTEAT: My name is Linda Poteat. As James said, I'm the director of disaster response at Interaction. And for those that aren't familiar with Interaction, we are the largest alliance of U.S.-based NGOs that do relief and development overseas. So I work in our Humanitarian Policy and Practice Team, and so I sort of get to be the queen of all bad things. So right now we're dealing with our colleagues at OFDA and Red Cross and everyone else with the Pakistan floods, but certainly most recently with Haiti. I spent 10 years in the field doing emergency response before I came back to the States, and I was with Interaction for three months when the tsunami hit. So you know, they didn't really ease me in. It was a bit of a trial by fire with that one.

And that was sort of – because I was always on the receiving end of stuff, I had a particular perspective on appropriate donations. But it was really interesting being in D.C. and sort of having an inside view on coordination and just seeing how very generous the

American public is. And I think that's something that cannot be underlined enough. People really want to do good stuff. They want to help. I think we have a society that's very charitable but often they need some guidance in how to do it best. And not to rival Ann's stories but we actually got a box of Thai food at our office saying, could you please send this to Thailand. I'm like, I think they have Thai food there. But, I mean, again, it was very sweet but misguided. And of course when you open it up the noodle bags were open and stuff like that. So it was kind of like someone cleared out the shelf of the Thai food grocery store where they were and sent it to us. And whereas they were trying to do something nice and useful it probably wasn't good, and they spent money on shipping it to us and then we felt badly about that because that sort of money could be used to do more good and useful things.

It's interesting to me because – to go back to the generosity of the American public – I think kind of worldwide we're viewed as more of a materialistic society in that, you know, it's all about the cash money and that sort of thing. But I think when people are trying to give a donation when they see something bad has happened, they want a personal connection to the donation that they're giving. And so, just writing a check or clicking on the website often isn't enough for people. They want to send their used clothing. They want to, you know, send toys and shoes and other things to people because they want to have something that came from them going to someone who's in need. And I think that that's something extremely commendable. When you do it in the States domestically, it kind of works. You take it to Goodwill or Salvation Army or something or, you know, you take it to your local church or synagogue or mosque. But when you're doing it overseas it entails a tremendous amount of cost that I don't think people really realize.

So for example, you know, a box of used clothes then has to be shipped, which costs money. It arrives at a warehouse where, in case you don't know, you have to pay rent. If you're the consignee, you have to pay rent on space in that warehouse until you pick up your stuff, and then you have to pay a customs clearance fee. And so, when you're in a – and then you have to figure out what to do with it once you get it and you have to have your own warehouse space that's probably full of other things too. And so, particularly in a disaster when so much stuff is coming in, the rentals fees in the customs house can get really, really expensive. When I was in the field, we actually had a donation of clothes that ended up costing us about \$40,000 between shipping costs and customs clearance and all that sort of thing, so it really wasn't free. And it did include full-body ski suits for people in Congo, which, again, wasn't particularly useful, not a good use of, you know, donated money. So I think the challenge is really, how do we make sure that we can sort of include that personal touch? Like, how do we help people to feel that sort of connection in a way?

I got a call in the early days of tsunami from a Girl Scout troop leader. She was like, okay, my girls, we're going to make teddy bears and send them to Sri Lanka. And so I tried to tell them like, well, I'm not sure that stuffed animals are the most important thing right now. I get you want the comfort and all that sort of stuff but, what those folks really need now is shelter and food and health care and things like that. And I'm thinking, this could be a real teachable moment. Why not sit down with the girls and explain that to them? Maybe they could make the teddy bears and sell them and take the money, pick a charity, have a look at the Interaction list of folks who are responding. And she's like, no, no, no, they just really want to make the teddy bears and they want to send them. I'm like, okay, you can do that but – I mean, for me that was a missed opportunity to really teach people about how to connect with folks overseas. That probably wasn't the best way of doing it. And I think, again, that's our challenge and I look forward to hearing some thoughts from folks in the audience on how we can – how we can do a better job of this because you guys are the folks who are reading the reports of what we're doing in these different places.

I think our members are starting to learn from this sort of thing and I think they're trying to figure out the best way to help people visualize the gift that they give. So for example, in the development context, Heifer International does a great thing where, you can – you spend \$50 and you can give a goat to a woman in a village in India. And then that goat, when it has a baby, it gets given to somebody else. And so, when you give that money, like in your head you see a goat. And that's a good thing and you can – and it's obvious what the benefits would be. And so the challenge is how we do that in an emergency disaster situation, and some of our members have come up with some creative things. After tsunami in Indonesia, the American Refugee Committee has sort of livelihoods packages, and some of them were quite small like getting small petty vendors up and running, all the way up to, like, buying a new fishing boat, which is about \$2,000. So you know, if communities wanted to get together and raise money for \$2,000 they could say, we bought a fishing boat.

And then the challenge then becomes, for the folks at the field level, is how you, you know, remain accountable for that. How do you sort of feed back into those groups and make sure that they know that what they did actually got to the end user? But it's something that is really important and a challenge I think that we have to take on if we want to make this an educational experience for people. Let's see. I think also a number of our members, we have fundraising departments in our organizations, and so there are people there who specialize in reaching out to schools and communities. And so, if your school or your church or your synagogue or whatever wants to get involved in something, there are people that are resources for you. If you pick an NGO that you're particularly interested in or the American Red Cross or whomever, you can reach out to them and say, we want to do something; it's not going to be really big, but what can we do in a way that would be useful for people and that we could also raise awareness of the situation and keep our community kind of engaged in the long term – you know, particularly after a natural disaster, the long-term recovery and rehabilitation in an area? So there are people who are around who would be most welcome to – or most willing to help you with this.

Another challenge that we have are people who want to donate their time, who want to volunteer – and, again, another good and wonderful thing. In the immediate days after a disaster, you really want trained professionals who know how to do these sorts of things. It's not really a volunteer kind of thing. There are very specialized sort of coordination structures and all these sorts of things that you really do need to know about and it is a particular skill set. So for us at the – you know, in the early days, having

volunteers who aren't particularly clued into a lot of the things that are going on, it isn't particularly helpful, and also because after a natural disaster – and we can say this definitely for tsunami and Haiti – there's a limited amount of housing food, water, vehicles, fuel, and those sorts of things should be primarily being utilized by our beneficiaries, first of all, and secondly by the aid workers who are trying to help them. And having a lot of volunteers who are coming in who might not be as value-added in that particular phase of the disaster isn't that helpful. Also, you know, we had a lot of people calling up saying that they wanted to volunteer; like, I want to go to Thailand; can you send me to Thailand or to Haiti or whatever? And one of the things we also have to tell people is there are a lot of very capable Thai folks, Indonesian folks, Sri Lankan, Haitians who could use the work right now, and it's more important for us to make sure that they're earning money, that their families are being taken care of, and they actually speak the language, have a cultural context. I mean, they're the folks who really should be rebuilding their countries in the first place.

And so, we often say to people wait for like six months and then when it's the recovery phase and there's easier things to do like repainting schools and stuff like that, that would be great, but not in the early days when we're actually trying to make sure that we can get like 20,000 gallons of water – clean water to people every day because it's probably not a skill set that you have at the moment. We can always recommend them. If they're interested, there's training opportunities that they can take advantage of, but in the early days not something that's particularly useful for us. Another thing we try to explain to people is that there are ways of getting involved in your community that don't involve you necessarily having to travel because, for example, with the recent earthquake in Haiti, there were Haitian communities all over the United States hugely impacted by that. Many people lost family members. And there's an opportunity to volunteer within those communities, helping bereaved families, maybe even helping them with basic things like grocery shopping or babysitting services while they're trying to make family arrangements and things like that.

So it's a way that you can actually give back to affected communities in a way that doesn't require travel or anything but actually supports people and makes them feel sort of more a part of the American community where they're living at this point in time. So I mean, just to close, we have an extremely generous public and we need to help them figure out the best way to get involved in disaster response in a way that's efficient and effective, that doesn't interfere with other things and actually helps us get our job done in a more efficient way. So I'll look forward to hearing your thoughts on that a little later on.

SANDRA SCHIMMELPFENNIG: My history is I was sent to Thailand after the tsunami to work in a government office and to try to coordinate the vast amount of aid flooding into the area. And so we tracked every single aid organization – local, national, international – and when that job got done, we expanded across all six provinces. And we were the go-to place for information, for researchers, for donors, and we saw really firsthand a lot of the issues that have been brought up today. We saw the impact on the local communities of all of the good intentions that were out there. After coming back from Thailand, I started blogging at Good Intentions Are Not Enough to try to inform donors about the best way that they can make sure that their actions match their good intentions, that they have the positive impact that they're hoping for.

So what has been learned from past disasters? One of them is that donated goods are often inappropriate. They've already spoken about it, but there's a lot of things that are not appropriate. You don't send Spam to a Muslim country. You don't send spaghetti strap tank tops to a very conservative community. You don't send flip-flops to someplace that's cold. So very often donated goods are inappropriate and they go unused. The second thing is that with growing mobility, more and more people are simply showing up. They're either trying to get a job ahead of time or they just simply show up at the disaster site. And that outpouring of volunteers also has some unintended consequences. And the third one is that there has been a flourish of start-up organizations coming after the earthquake.

So a lot of these topics are mentioned already. There's a huge waste disposal problem with donated goods. For instance, if you do send over winter gloves and winter coats to Thailand, what do you do with them? You've actually got to take it and throw it away somewhere. So these things can pile up either at the ports or they can pile up in the temporary camps. They can clog the ports because the ports are damaged very often. They can only get limited goods through. If you're trying to get your donation of baby food through, they're going to be processing that. That may keep boats or planes from landing and getting through medical equipment. And so, you can actually block other supplies from getting into the country. Most goods can be purchased locally even after a disaster. When disasters strike, they don't affect the entire country, and even if they affect large parts of the country, there are neighboring countries.

So in Thailand when the tsunami hit, it hit a five-kilometer strip of coastline. So five kilometers, yes, goods are not available in those five kilometers, but you go six kilometers or 10 kilometers in from the coastline and it's not affected. You can buy shoes and food and medicine six kilometers in. And so, we have this idea because we see all the pictures of this massive destruction that are on the news, that there is nothing available, when in reality, there is. You can purchase it locally 10 miles down the road and bring it into the area. And then, as she mentioned as well, it can cost so much more to import it. Truly there is the shipping, the storage, the customs and then the getting it there. And very often when people donate it, they may get it shipped for free but they don't take in all of the additional costs after that. So I've seen the exact same examples where school supplies were sent for a school and it cost far more to get them to the schools than if we'd just simply purchased them right there.

And so, it's not a cost-efficient way. And because you're shipping them in, you're bringing in free goods that compete with the local merchants who are dying for customers right now because they've lost a huge customer base. Their businesses are on the edge

of going under. They need to have customers. And if you're sending things in for free, you're not purchasing them locally – so you're actually out-competing the local businesses. So you can hurt instead of help the local industry. This is a picture from Thailand. These are donated clothing. This is a year after the tsunami. This is a parking garage and the boards go up to about here on me. And these are bags and bags and bags of donated clothing that are molding in the tropical heat. They weren't needed. They were shipped over. The government didn't know where to put them and so they shoved them into a government parking lot, and a year later they had no idea what to do with the clothing. The same thing happened in India where they actually had to stop the relief efforts to go and clean up the clothing because it was actually being dumped on the sides of the road. The villages didn't need any more clothing – they were turning it away – but they had all these trucks filled with donated goods.

And so the trucks had to deliver the goods and nobody would accept them, so the trucks were dumping it along the side of the road. The cattle were getting in and eating the clothes and starting to choke, and because it was people's livelihoods, they had to go clean up the clothes so that they weren't killing the local cattle. So it can actually do damage. This is a picture of one of the projects that came in Thailand where all of the donated clothing nobody was using they were turning into trinkets and selling them to volunteers and disaster tourists. And so these dolls were made from cut-up donated clothing. And, again, this is the picture I was talking about earlier where, in Thailand, it's just that very thin strip. You've got all of the rest of Thailand where you have personnel, you've got supplies. And even in areas like Sri Lanka, this center area was really only secondarily affected. The water did not come in that far, and so you had all of the businesses and everything in Sri Lanka. So the disasters hit just a really limited area, and we have more of a feeling that they're hitting the entire country. Volunteerism is also a growing issue. With the growing mobility, as I said, people are showing up, skilled or unskilled. At the Tsunami Volunteer Center, this volunteer center was started because so many people just showed up in Thailand to help. And you had volunteers running around all over the place not necessarily knowing what they were doing.

They actually had 3,500 volunteers show up within the first couple of months. Imagine the impact of 3,500 volunteers who have never responded to a disaster before. So more and more after disasters, organizations are having to be started to just manage the people that are coming into the country. Another issue that's come up is orphanages. And there is a misconception that after disasters there are a lot of orphans that need to be taken care of. In reality, there are very few true orphans following a disaster. This is from the World Disaster Report. And it's talking about the fact that in Indonesia, even though news reports went out that there were 10,000 children that needed to be taken care of, in actuality only 60 children were without somebody that would take care of them. And you think about your own children; if a disaster were to hit today and you and your spouse were to die, how many other people would have to die before that child had no one that could take care of them? We're talking grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, friends. So there's really very few children that end up with nobody willing to take care of them. In Thailand there were actually no need for orphanages because the government built boarding schools. And so, any child that was an orphan could go and live in the boarding schools, and yet still orphanages were built.

So because we had seen all of this happen, when the Haiti earthquake hit, we immediately tried to get the news out. We tried to let people know what to do and what not to do. And we called it total media domination because we did; we got into the New York Times, we got into CNN, CBC, The Daily Dish, trying to get the word out about what is the right thing and the wrong thing to do after a disaster? But, even though we got a lot of information out, there were still the same problems as there were in past disasters. You still had movie stars flying their private jets with their own donated goods down to Haiti. You had a campaign to get 50,000 pairs of donated shoes to send to Haiti. The aid bloggers were accused of wanting to withhold aid so that the Haitians would die and we could harvest their organs and sell them on the open market. That was one extreme end. At the other extreme end we were told to go "blog" ourselves, that they were going to go do it anyway. And this particular person that wrote this, they were bringing in life-saving sunglasses to Haiti.

So even though the message was important, some people heard it but a lot of people didn't want to hear it because in our culture we very much have the attitude of I want to get out there, I want to help myself, I want to physically pick something up and send it. And so, what the aid bloggers learned from this experience is we can't just say, just send money because a lot of people don't feel the connection with just sending money. They need to have something more than that. The aid blogger world got together and tried to decide what people could do that would be productive. Some of the things were already mentioned: taking up a collection of goods but instead of sending them overseas, selling them at garage sales and then donating the money; volunteering to help the international organization at home because they are going to need to have some services at home that are met. Virtual volunteering is becoming pretty big as well. With the Haiti earthquake, Ushahidi, which is trying to crowd-source information, was needing people to take information coming in from cell phones and put it into a mapping program. And those types of crowd-sourcing are going to increase as time goes on.

If you absolutely have to go there and be there yourself, then we ask that you only go if you have a skill and that you take those skills and you help local organizations build up their capacity because suddenly they've got to expand horrendously, they've got to go to coordination meetings, they may not speak English, they might need to get websites up in English so they can get money. So local organizations need a lot of assistance after disasters. Or if, for some reason, you have to go and shovel rubble, do a volunteer one/pay one. There is this buy one/give one that's pretty big now with TOMS Shoes, where you buy a pair of shoes and they send a pair of shoes overseas – not a good idea. But, as a model of that, if you're going to work for a month, pay a local person's salary for a month so that it's not you going and competing for jobs, because if you do it for free, somebody else is not being paid to do it and they've just lost their livelihoods. But instead, for every month you work, you pay somebody else's salary so they work for a month, because what people really want after a disaster is a job so that they can help their family get back on their feet. Thank you.

Question and Answer Period

Question 1: I'm a development consultant. I actually have a two-part question. The first is that you all spent a lot of time talking about the things not to send and actually relatively little time talking about the things that are more badly needed in responding to disasters like in Haiti where you have pretty much complete demolition of an entire region. Are you looking for businesses and others to do things like donate equipment for manufacturing for the production of housing or any of those kinds of things as some of the things that you need on your lists first, or are you only looking for people who can do things like provide bottled water during the first few months or aspirin or whatever?

And then, the second part of that is although it sounds like you are trying to do a lot of media outreach, it also sounds like, quite honestly, you're doing a really bad job of it because you're only talking to the media and stuff when there is a disaster and they're focused on pictures and you're not giving them enough of the pictures ahead of time. And that's because I used to be a journalist. I mean, I think while you all have made progress on some of this stuff, I think you need to be a lot more aggressive about educating and informing journalists, especially in the television media because they need pictures well in advance, and that means spending a lot of time talking and training their assignments editors and some of their key correspondents.

FLEMING: Great. Thank you. Anyone want to take part one to start? Ann?

KAGUYUTAN: Sure, I can talk about some of the products and donations of what's really needed. I know my colleagues can speak to this as well, but really we're not just one organization that's in charge of identifying the needs. At least for the American Red Cross, we're focusing on the long-term sheltering. So all the needs that we're identifying that are associated with that sheltering, we try and, again, procure it locally. So when we do approach businesses – and, actually, most of the time, I'd have to say, when a disaster strikes, for the majority of the time our messaging and what we do on the phone is really we're saying no in a nice way.

For the majority of those folks that offer up any – these can be large multi-national corporations with the best of intentions offering up really useful supplies that we may actually need here at home in our backyard in our local communities but are brought – again, the logistics of getting those items donated to the relief site is just really complicated. Again, so we try and procure those things locally, either through, again, using the example – using other parts of the country or using warehouses that we have in other countries that are nearby.

POTEAT: Yeah. I mean, again, to sort of underline what Sandra was saying, I mean, Haiti was not demolished, and not even all of Port au Prince was demolished. And so there's still there's a functioning country. There's plenty of stuff there and there's plenty of people who know how to build buildings. There are a lot of Haitian building contractors and all that sort of thing, so that capacity is there. To be honest, the biggest challenge – not to get into the weeds too much but – with shelter in Haiti is land tenure issues. That is a much bigger problem than, like, the actual, like, being able to do stuff. I mean, in getting to your point about the media, I think the challenge with that is – because, I mean, this is one of the things that CIDI does. I mean, there's really good PSAs out there about this, but folks are not interested in this until it happens, and no matter how much we've done ahead of time – because if you look, after Mitch we did a lot of stuff because Mitch was particularly bad.

We got a little bit better in tsunami – a lot of time spent on that. The same thing with Haiti but we still have journalists who run down there and are spending, let's be honest; they want to be in front of the camera, right? I mean, if they had sat down with aid agencies ahead of time and said, okay, what's the most useful way for us to spread the message – and our folks were reaching out, particularly when somebody would do something that just didn't sit well and was more spin than reality. One of the things that we are really concerned about is the dignity of our beneficiaries. We don't want them to be portrayed as helpless people because they're not. They're very capable. They're traumatized as we would be and as we saw our own countrymen after Katrina, but they're extremely capable.

And so, we spent a lot of time trying to get them to not show them in that way. But I would welcome suggestions on how, in the interim when there's other media stories going on, how do we get their attention on this sort of thing, because we have sort of standard, op-eds and stuff that we stick in in the early days for everything, and they get in but they don't get very much attention, or they kind of get slammed, as Sandra said. And I think we're trying to be helpful and we're trying to offer alternative suggestions but for some reason it's just not – it just doesn't resonate with people and we're not sure why that is.

FLEMING: Before we go to Sandra, Linda, you mentioned CIDI. Could you elaborate on what that is?

POTEAT: Unless Suzanne would like to. But, CIDI works with USAID. It's the Center for International Disaster Information – www.cidi.org. But, I mean, they're very supportive of our community as well because when a disaster happens, they're actually sort of a repository of offers of both in-kind assistance and volunteer assistance. And so, we're often – in the early days of a disaster, they will often set up a phone bank and we kind of – we get a lot of calls ourselves and so we direct it to them because they have a relationship with businesses and figure out how to sort that out.

I mean, perhaps we can ask Suzanne at some point to sort that out. And perhaps we can ask Suzanne at some point to talk a little

bit about some of the partnerships that have been formed as a result of that. But they also do a PSA contest. Is it every year? I'm not sure. But there's a number of PSAs on their website about cash is best. And I think we made a lot of – it was extremely helpful to us, I think, during tsunami when we had Presidents Clinton and Bush giving that message and then in subsequent disasters it was really very helpful to have someone with that kind of media exposure passing that message.

FLEMING: Okay, thanks. And maybe we'll come back to CIDI if we have time. But, Sandra, if you just want to address this one, we'll go to the next question.

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: Yeah. As far as donating goods that organizations do need, don't ask to donate them after the disaster. Work with the organization before the disaster. A lot of the large international aid organizations preposition stocks throughout the world. And they need to test the product first, make sure it works. Don't offer up a new water filter that nobody has ever tried.

They need to make sure their staff knows how to do it, and it's prepositioned and that there's adequate numbers. But a lot of them will work with donated goods to preposition it, but in the middle of a disaster, for them to try out a new product or foodstuff is just too complicated. So a lot of them will but it's pre-disaster.

FLEMING: Okay, thank you. So the next questioner is right here.

Question 2: I'm a communications consultant, and I've worked in international disaster response for years with Red Cross before now. And I was thinking maybe USAID could address this question so no one organization has to answer it. But I was curious to see, how is Haiti absorbing all the generosity? I mean, I know that there is always inherent problems in a country being able to absorb all the generosity in the right ways and to get things flowing. Can you talk to us frankly about how things are going out there?

FLEMING: Right, and I noted in the presentation that Linda has been to Haiti and maybe can address that first.

POTEAT: Well, how can we do this in a fair and measured way? As in all disasters, the government was really impacted by this earthquake as well because it happened in the capital city. And I think the – I can't remember the exact amount but I think they lost between 10 and 15 percent of their civil servants in the earthquake. And, sadly for us, I mean, the earthquake happened at 4:45 in the afternoon and so the civil servants who really took their job seriously were still in the office. And so, I think of the ones that we lost, we probably lost some of the better, more committed folks. And, for our purposes, the Ministry of Planning is kind of the ministry that most of the NGOs plug into, and we lost the Minister of Plans and the person who is dedicated to working with the NGOs. So that was – I mean, that was a huge loss on a number of levels, and I think it's taken them a long time to kind of recover. I mean, everybody lost somebody in that tragedy so I think we have to be a little bit reserved in our judgment.

The emergency response phase the U.N. was really coordinating that, with some input from the government, and it went as best as it could. Emergency coordination is always a bit of controlled chaos, but if you know how to plug in, you know, it works out generally okay. I think as we move into the recovery phase it's going to get a little bit more complicated because obviously the government doesn't want random stuff going on and they want to have some sort of control over which projects are done and how they fit into their national strategy, and I think that's something that many of us are waiting for more clarification on. But they're getting some support from other governments, like seconding experienced staff and things like that, so we're hoping that things are going to move forward a people with that. But the issue – I mean, the sticking issues like land tenure is going to be a real problem when we have 1.5 million still living under plastic sheeting.

FLEMING: Sandra?

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: One of the other issues that's happening in Haiti is just the large number of aid organizations that go there. It's extraordinarily difficult to coordinate any organization group, but when you get 930 of them, coordination becomes more of a vague hope than a reality. And so that's one of the problems after disasters when you have so many organizations flooding into an area that maybe have never worked there before. It's very difficult to have a single response. You get a lot of competition and gaps in the aid.

Question 3: I was wondering – thinking about your earlier comments in terms of nobody's interested until there is a disaster, I think one of the groups that are is really the faith-based community, and I'm wondering what particular outreach the Red Cross or Interaction or others might have done in order to try and work with people with that. You know, for example, in Haiti you saw so many faith-based groups sending people for two weeks, and if you would think about, you know – if you could convince people to take the money that they would have spent on their flight and their airfare and their meals and donate all of that, what a huge impact we could be having.

KAGUYUTAN: In terms of working with local organizations like community faith-based groups. We do have – at least starting locally we have – we have about 700 or so chapters across the U.S. So starting with that messaging, almost one church at a time it's going to take a long time, but we do have partnerships and agreements with other associations who can help us deliver that message of how to appropriately give and donate and what to do when a disaster hits. And the key moment is to send out that messaging before a disaster hits.

Oftentimes people may read it, understand it, digest it, but, again, I think that when a disaster does hit, a lot of people are just emotionally tied to that disaster, want to just put out their hearts, help do anything and forget what we tried to talk to them about, you know, two weeks beforehand, a month beforehand or even a year beforehand. So it is challenging but we do have to try and reach out at the very grassroots level to make sure that our right messaging on how to help is out there.

POTEAT: Yeah, and from the Interaction side, you know, we have a number of faith-based members who are active with us, and there's actually – on the – there's a Christian alliance called the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations, AERDO, that is also similarly active on these sorts of issues. And I think, you know, for us it's getting the message out. For our members, most of them know this issue because they've had to deal with inappropriate donations in the past. Some of the newer members are learning. And, you know, one of the benefits of Interaction is they can learn from their colleagues and that's a really good thing.

To be fair, on the Haiti response, I have to say that some of the smaller faith-based organizations were able to get up – the ones who already had networks in country were actually able to deliver services faster than some of the larger organizations because they were impacted. You know, their warehouses fell down and other things, and if you were smaller they had smaller infrastructure and could work faster. But I think you're probably talking about a lot of the folks that didn't actually have anything down there. And we spent a lot of time actually calling in USAID's Office for Faith-Based Initiatives and something-something community based something-something. Anyway. (Laughter.) It's a very long title but I know about the faith-based thing. But they were doing regular phone calls for NGOs that were interested in supporting the work in Haiti, and so we called in – I called in from Port au Prince on a number of occasions to talk to them about best ways to fit into the coordination structure and, you know, best ways to support the larger response.

And, I mean, I think you're right. I have to say that we were kind of happy for a long time that American Airlines couldn't actually fly directly into Port au Prince, and we were sort of dreading when that was going to happen, and it did – a sort of huge influx of people who didn't really have any previous training experience or anything, and a lot of the volunteerism, because everyone wanted to do spring break, helping out in Haiti – again, not particularly helpful for us. But it's really hard to turn that off in the momentum of the moment but there really isn't the space for dialogue beforehand because people are thinking about other stuff. You know, no one is focused on, well, what's going to happen in five years when there's the next really big disaster? And figuring out how to engage is very difficult.

I mean, when we put out our crisis response list – like right now we have one out for Pakistan and we sent out a press release – we include our guidelines because we also have a PSA both in English and Spanish on appropriate donations. We try to make sure that that's highlighted. It's not usually the thing that gets picked up. But, I mean, you're right; it's a difficult thing. But the other problem I just wanted to point out; when you're saying they should save the money and just send it in, there's also an absorptive capacity issue too, and I think in a way it's almost more like how can they actually get their hands on something but maybe not in that direct context?

Question 4: I wonder if any of your organizations can speak to the opportunity to direct, at the time of a disaster, efforts to other less sexy disasters, if you will. I mean, clearly, like when there's something like the tsunami happens, it's very telegenic, it's very sudden. It was the 26th of December; everybody is sitting around watching TV. But, you know, like I was in Sri Lanka after the tsunami and people – my colleagues who were coming in from Africa were saying we've been setting our hair on fire for 10 years about famines and those type of things. Clearly you've had some success with the send-cash-not-goods messaging. Have you tried any other messages and say, okay, now that we've got your attention, let's talk about long-term issues in another country, or floods or, you know, basically undersubscribed needs as opposed to over-subscribed ones?

KAGUYUTAN: Sure. Absolutely. Red Cross responds to about 70,000 disasters a year, so you can imagine those aren't all the Katrinas that happen, or any of the flooding that happened in Nashville, Tennessee just a few months ago. So we're constantly trying to beat that drum, saying, yes, we know we're there for those big, visible disasters, where we are needed, but we're also in the community next door when a house fire has displaced a family and we need your help for that. That message, it's hard because when you've got the media that's showing images of a disaster that's happening in another country and it's what's blitzing all media outlets; it's what you're hearing on the radio, TV, what you're seeing on the Internet, it's hard to get our – our mission, basically what it is, it's a Red Cross mission to get through to tell everybody what we're doing, not only in that particular disaster but in the other parts as well.

We try and do it – we have more success when we can talk face to face obviously with somebody that we're going to sit down, from a fund-raising perspective, talk to them about the opportunities of supporting our organization, not just the disaster because there is that immediate response that is needed but we're also – there's going to be long-term effects. We're going to be – three, five, 10 years down the line we're going to still need their support, again, in just reaching out and telling them what – the other services that we're providing. And it is very challenging and difficult but we try and do it, opening up the doors with one disaster to show and highlight what we do with all the other disasters every day.

Question 5: I just want to say that we are committed to trying to be as supportive as we possibly can to the messaging that you've talked about, which is very applicable here in the United States as well. Admittedly, there is a little more flexibility perhaps in the States to volunteer in disasters and to send goods that might be useful. But still, at the same time, all of those things you talked about are critically, actually, universally worldwide, including here in the States. So we're – and thanks to Suzanne Brooks' help,

actually. For some years now, you know, Suzanne will be CIDI. We've learned a lot, but we want to do more to help find ways to support your efforts. So maybe we could work more closely after this.

For example, Linda, just this morning, I think it was, I looked on the Interaction website; I saw the very well-organized work you do in promoting your members, you know, to support the efforts in Pakistan. So what we do, for example, is get that out to our domestic community. The emergency management community in the United States can help an awful lot, including the nonprofit community here in the States of course, so that perhaps that will mitigate some of the inappropriate goods and services that might make their way to Pakistan otherwise. The one question I did have, if I may, is is there, in the cluster system on the ground, say in Haiti – there's no single one, I don't think, that works the donations issue. Is that correct, or does it –

POTEAT: Well, a lot of it would initially come through the logistics cluster, yeah. I mean, and that was one of the interesting things, actually, going along with kind of media images, is that there was a lot bad press in the early days of Haiti because people were taking pictures, like, look, there's all this stuff sitting next to the airport and nobody is doing anything with it. Well, it was all stuff that came in with no consignee, so nobody knew who it was for, nobody wanted to take it because it might be for somebody else, and the logistics cluster eventually just had to deal with it. And the government was like, whatever; you guys just take it and do what you want with it.

And then they had to figure out how to apportion it out to everyone. I mean, because they were the guys who were working the ports and the airport, they're going to be the first face of a big, huge pile of stuff and trying to figure out what to do with it. But the various clusters – like the sectoral clusters like shelter and health and stuff like that were also looking at managing their own donations. So a lot of the pharmaceutical donations that were coming in, WHO had a warehouse and people could come and request stuff out of the warehouse.

Question 6: I want to know – a couple of you had mentioned some of the training that's available for people who do want to go into a disaster zone, and can you elaborate on where that training is available, what information is out there, and how people with skills can get trained to be able to go?

KAGUYUTAN: Sure, we'll start out with the Red Cross here and go down the line. At the very minimum level, basic level, we have, again, 700 chapters across the U.S. So starting out with even your basic first aid and CPR class, you can take that class and start a chapter and then sort of build from there. So it's then responding to a disaster in your community, be a part of the DAT team, which is a Disaster Action Team, where you can be on call, sign up, meet with a family that's just been displaced by a house fire, talk with them, see what their disaster cause needs are, and then build your rapport from there.

If you already have skills, come talk to the Red Cross. Come talk to us. There are specialized trainings that occur with experienced sort of experts in their different fields, whether it's water sanitation or logistics or whatnot. We do have those specialized trainings for international disasters but we do look for those folks that do have significant experience in disaster response before we send them out. But a very basic way to start, contact, for us, your local Red Cross chapter.

POTEAT: For other sort of international training, one of the kind of standard organizations that we generally recommend is RedR. It's R-E-D-R but it stands for Registered Engineers in Disaster Relief. So sort of, this is a roster of engineers that were willing to be deployed, so they have training – you know, kind of week-long trainings for water engineers or construction engineers to take what they know and kind of help them figure out how to use that in a disaster because there are special considerations that have to be taken – you know, that you have to know. But they also do some very good security courses and they do – it's not so new anymore, but a relatively new course called Essentials in Humanitarian Practice. So it talks about humanitarian principles, codes of conduct and all those sorts of things. I mean, their headquarters is in the U.K. but they do trainings in the States and all over the place as well.

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: Those are the only two I know of.

Question 7: I'm a professor at American University. Since OFDA is coordinating this meeting, I assume OFDA has some role in this particular subject on public engagement, and I wonder what the comment are of the three of you of how well AID does on this subject, and some advice you might have to AID to improve it.

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: My focus is always just on getting the word out to donors, both the individual person and the larger donors. So really, if it is possible to get very much more proactive and put the force of USAID behind it and the logo of USAID, that carries weight to it, and so to try to do that as much as possible prior to a disaster so that when everyone hits the ground – We found that when someone is committed to doing something, you can't educate them then. They've already invested too much. They're going to move forward regardless of what you say. So we need to educate them before they've invested too much in it.

POTEAT: On a practical level, I mean, I'm extremely grateful that they fund CIDI because that saves me a lot of time. I have to tell you that tsunami first happened, no one remembered to tell me that CIDI existed. So I was taking about 200 phone calls a day from people who wanted to be really helpful. And I was, like, trying to be really helpful to them but I had other stuff I needed to get done. And then when I finally discovered I could shift all the calls over there – it was so cool. I mean, they've been a very good partner to us because they've always put up with the lists of folks who were responding and all that sort of thing.

But I think also, one of the most important things I think that AID can do in a public engagement way is to help us do our job better. And I think their support of coordination structures is so important because if we – I mean, everyone thinks we're not coordinating but in fact we are. It's imperfect but it's actually happening. And if we didn't have the support to do that, things would be, oh, so messy. So that's – I mean, there's a little bit of self-interest behind that but it's also extremely important to have our colleagues at OCHA and all of these other structures being supported in the way that they are supported by AID.

KAGUYUTAN: Just to echo what Sandra and Linda said, I think – at least for the Red Cross I can speak for – we've got great partnership with our government partners here, not only as partners but also as beneficiaries too. We look for – we're not entirely government funded. We survive by public donations, and so those times we do get grants and we're looking for some assistance, we, again, have great partnerships with our partners there.

FLEMING: Great, thanks. And just to – you know, I won't say much. It is hard to be a moderator for this particular topic because there's a lot I would like to say and that should be said on behalf of OFDA, but the point of this meeting really is to hear from our technical experts, and if you'd like to talk afterwards, we can go, you know, until midnight or so afterwards. So there was one question over here and then I'll come back to this side. Yes, please.

Question 8: I'm also a communications consultant here in D.C. And, unlike Carol, Haiti was actually my first disaster that I worked at. And I had a question. I appreciate all the emphasis that Sandra and others have put on this cash-is-king message and getting that out, and I also understand the need of the general public to feel like there is a direct connection between their gift and what they're accomplishing.

So when you spoke about this warehouse issue in Thailand and \$40,000 that was paid to store this stuff and the customs fees, my fantasy for consultants like us is to consider taking some resources up front and really working on this issue of NGO program staff sharing information readily with communications folks so that we can get the word out to the public about how their dollars are being used and make them feel very engaged after the donation has been given. Because, as Ann pointed out, these disasters just keep coming and it shouldn't just be a one-off thing where we feel like our money just kind of disappears into the universe, but we want people to feel engaged, and when we hear from the Red Cross or other NGOs that we've donated to, it's not just an ask for the next disaster; it's a reassurance that our dollars have been well spent and specific examples of how. Could anyone address that thought?

KAGUYUTAN: Sure, I can start. I know that stewardship and transparency is something – one of our sort of guidelines – one of the top-priority guidelines, that we try and make sure that donors know what we did with their donations, how we use their donations, and making sure that we show people that we use their donations appropriately.

We actually just posted, on July 12th, the six-months stewardship report for how we're doing in Haiti, how we're spending down the funds, how much we've raised, how much has been programmed out. So in that sense, we take that very seriously in making sure that our transparency is there for our donors and our supporters so that, again, they continue to trust the Red Cross and continue to donate through us. And so, we're going to continue with sending out the message with progress reports on how we're doing, making sure if there's any hiccoughs, that we talk about it and address those hiccoughs and make sure that, again, we're being up front with our donors.

POTEAT: Yeah, and similarly for us, I mean, our community also takes very seriously our responsibility that, you know, we raise a tremendous amount of money from private, you know, donations, you know, \$25 at a time. And, you know, we have to report back to our institutional donors on a regular basis and we have clear goals and objectives that we have to report back on. We're not required to do that to the general public but I think we know it is our responsibility. And so, we, at Interaction, also did a six-month accountability report on how much money our members raised privately, not including their institutional donors, how much they've already spent, what they spent it on and what their plans are for the rest. It's similar to what we did in tsunami where people raised so much money and ended up with developing three- to five-year recovery plans because in order to spend down the money – in order to actually fulfill the long-term commitment that we made to those communities.

So you know, those sorts of efforts are underway and I think we – I mean, I would certainly welcome feedback from communications specialists on how well we did with that and how to make it better. And I think – I mean, there are a lot of field staff that would really enjoy the opportunity to explain to someone what it is that they do all day when they're in Haiti or, you know, in Indonesia or whatever, because I think there isn't a really sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the work. And if there was a way of translating that back out to people, because that might help with the volunteerism, you know, from one perspective, but also just letting people know what – you know, what all it takes to actually get that stuff out to folks and make sure it's being used correctly and that it's being checked on and all those sorts of things. I think people would welcome that conversation.

Question 9: Thank you for being patient with me as I figure it out – is this issue of also, in addition to the points that you're addressing, institutionally I agree that the three of you and the folks that you work with are all committed to this transparency. What I'm also talking about is the challenge of disaster relief workers on the ground working 20-hour days, you know, dehydrated, really trying to address these disaster issues, with a communications consultant such as myself running around after them with a pen and a notebook, trying to get them to give me some concrete information that I can share with the home office and then with would-be donors as well as current donors.

So I mean, Interaction, I'm sure you've done some seminars on that, but this idea of actually educating disaster relief workers of what the importance of communications – not only that cash is king but also, here's how your donations are being spent, but all of that. And I think that's a challenge. I think their work is critical. They're the ones that are saving lives. And I think communications and fundraising folks are the ones that are making that possible. So somehow there's an internal disconnect, in not all organizations but maybe in some, and I wonder how we as a community can improve that flow.

POTEAT: Well, I mean, we can talk a little bit offline but our – you know, our communications department does work with the communication directors of all of our members on these sorts of issues, and so maybe that would be an interesting place for you to start, actually, to find out what kind of questions are being asked at this point in time.

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: In general, it really is important how you present your work and, frankly, the complexity of it. Very often I think we try to portray it too simply and that then leads to a lot of these bad practices. For instance, if you say your \$20 bought a goat, did it really or did it pay someone's salary or did it – it doesn't actually – it's not an actual one-to-one transaction. It's a little bit of a sleight of hand that they're doing. And if you don't portray the complexity of it, it seems like anyone could just fly in and help, or it seems like spending money on staff that are experienced is a waste of money when you can bring in volunteers. And so, we really do need to be careful as media for aid organizations that we're really presenting an accurate picture or else we reinforce these bad practices. So we need to be careful about that.

FLEMING: Thank you. There was a question right here in front.

Question 10: I think all the panelists touched on this briefly but I was hoping that some of you could maybe elaborate on some of the experiences you've had, maybe challenges you faced or successes you've had working with both – and I hope that you will address both – working with local businesses who can provide many of the goods that you need in the disaster response, as well as some of the larger firms who maybe have investors here in the United States or have similar social responsibility programs and can sort of provide more assistance. So any anecdotes you might have about experiences with either of those two types of organizations would be very enlightening for me. Thank you.

SCHIMMELPFENNIG: There were some good examples in Thailand after the tsunami. IBM sent in computer specialists and computers and they ran the body identification and family communication program. And so, they sent up a local temple and they were where – they worked with the local forensics people to try to match up the DNA to provide the computers and the software needed, and then for families to get onto an Internet somewhere to connect with their families, wherever they are, to let them know they're alive or to put out announcements of who they're looking for.

So IBM did that with all voluntary staff and computers. Coca-Cola also brought out their trucks and started offering portable water filtration. And so they had – because they used water filtration anyway to produce Coca-Cola, and so suddenly you had water purification right there on the spot. Tesco has started work with the Thai Red Cross in producing cards so that disaster survivors can just go to Tesco and buy whatever they want. It's like a mini debit card. And so, in future disasters the Thai Red Cross will immediately have X number of these that they can hand out to the people and the people can go buy their own clothes or food

KAGUYUTAN: Sure. Something that's really interesting that's sort of – a fundraising method that's really taking off with the Red Cross and I think here in the States is texting. During Haiti, our donations that came through texting – if you text HAITI2909999 – we raised over \$30 million for it. It was incredible. Mobile Accord is the foundation that we worked with to institute that text-giving. As an in-kind donation they waived all their fees to us. So I think that's a really great example of something that's new technology, something that we're trying out, we've never ventured on, and that willingness for that company and/or foundation to go alongside with us and not really knowing where we're heading. It was a great success.

POTEAT: I have to say, I'm trying to think of an example from Haiti where businesses stepped in and were particularly useful. I mean, I remember the Coca-Cola thing. That was actually really useful when water was a really big issue. And I think – I think the airport strip that was used in Aceh was also from either an oil company or Coca-Cola, I can't remember, and they just opened it up and they're like, yeah, whatever you need, you know, that would be great. This is actually something that I wrestle with a bit because I know – what does BCLC stand for, the business –

POTEAT: Business Civic Leadership Council?

POTEAT: Right, yeah. And so, you know, the regularly have – like on Monday they're having a phone call about Pakistan. They talk about these things a lot. I'm still waiting to hear more about what actually happens at the field level. And I know, you know, some of the companies have been talking to us about what our members are doing in Haiti and I'm waiting to hear from any of our members that someone has, you know, either reached out to them directly for something. I would like for these sorts of things to happen but I just haven't seen it. I have to say, you know, a couple of things that we did benefit from in the early days in Haiti was that AT&T waived all of the roaming charges for the first two months of the response, which is extremely helpful because everybody was living off of international, you know, Blackberries and things like that.

So that was – you know, it wasn't them actually doing something on the ground but it probably saved us a tremendous amount of money. And I know a lot of the credit card companies also – if people were donating money using their American Express or Visa

or whatever, they were waiving the fees. So our NGOs, instead of losing 5 percent of every one of those donations, got all of that money, which actually added up to millions and millions of dollars. So that was another, you know, sort of positive thing that they did. As far as actual on-the-ground stuff, I'm not really sure about that, and it's something I've been curious about, so perhaps we can make a little research project, because it would be a good way of engaging but I'm not sure if the way the business community wants to engage is always the most useful way that our folks or the local communities need them to engage.

FLEMING: Okay, thank you. There was a question here. Was that – okay, thanks. I saw another one back here. Yes, please.

Question 11: Hi. Good morning. I would like to hear a little bit about your ability to communicate with other organizations on the ground in a disaster area, as well as your ability to communicate with the Department of Defense in these disasters, particularly Haiti. Thank you.

POTEAT: – since part of my portfolio at Interaction is the civil military liaison. So we work actually very closely with the Department of Defense. The United States Institute for Peace hosts a civil-military working group that's been meeting since 2005 now. A lot of times our focus tends to be on conflict areas like Afghanistan and Iraq, but certainly Haiti was – and other natural disaster responses would definitely be something that we talk about quite a bit. And what was quite interesting in Haiti – and we actually did an initial response review with our colleagues at OFDA, the U.N. and SOUTHCOM, Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff – was how we were all able to work together in the first few months of the response.

One of the gentlemen who participated in our dialogue very regularly from Joint Chiefs of Staff was seconded down to SOUTHCOM very quickly – Southern Command. For those of you who aren't familiar, it's the regional combatant command that is in charge of, basically, Latin America, Caribbean, South America. And because he was familiar with, you know, humanitarian coordination structure basically because of his exposure in the working group, we were in regular contact. And our colleagues from – the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also has a civil-military coordination section, and so we were able to get someone placed within SOUTHCOM.

And it was actually very lucky that we were able to find someone who still – a former Army colonel who still maintained a security clearance and so was placed in SOUTHCOM and was actually part of the general's brief every morning. Like, he would do all of the Js and then he would do OFDA and then OCHA, and then when we were there with Joe Becker then we got to do the brief too, which is sort of interesting and not so usual, I think, in most combatant commands. There were regular civil-military coordination meetings in Haiti every Saturday morning. So it was the U.S. military, the Canadians and all the other folks that were there, talking about how we were coordinating the activities that were going on. You know, for us, of course we're always – you know, we consider all of the militaries to be in support of the relief and development efforts, which should be led by civilian agencies, development professionals, that whole thing. And so, what they were doing was mostly logistics support and escorts when – particularly in the early days of food distribution there were some concerns, which actually tended to be unfounded. I mean, most of the food distributions were actually quite calm.

But I think, you know, on the whole, the community was very appreciative. You know, all of the militaries were very happy to stand in the background. They were there in support, weren't sort of getting out ahead of everyone else, and I think that was really – I think that was really appreciated. Again, in the early days of a disaster there's all sorts of coordination issues, but I think in general the structures are in place and they're actually sort of personal relationships that were in place to make it happen the right way. And what we try to do through the initial response review is to figure out how to turn personal relationships into institutional relationships so the next time this happens, the regional combatant command knows that they can call OCHA and get someone sitting there.

You know, all of them have OFDA representatives now at the time, and so talking to them ahead of time about what would happen if we had a disaster in our – you know, in our particular AOR. So I think there's – I mean, when I reflect back to how it worked during tsunami, it's just so much better this time I can't even tell you. I'm sorry, I can talk about this for hours and we can probably talk more offline, but just to say that it worked far better, I think, than anyone expected.

Question 12: I work with the AU-U.N. mission in Darfur. And I have previous experience in Sierra Leone where I was working for CARE Sierra Leone at the time and we had a donation of cash, and we tried to make agricultural tools because there was a farming season. So we tried to work with local businesses and they produced agricultural tools, but when we took them to the communities at the time, they rejected them because of the low quality. So I was wondering if you had similar experiences where you utilized cash and the quality – because of the local, let's say, market wasn't up to standards and up to the expectations of the local communities. Thank you.

POTEAT: Yeah, and there has actually been a lot of interesting writing done on cash-based assistance recently, and trying to give beneficiaries as much of a choice as possible. And I think one of the areas that people are leaning to right now is rather than just giving them stuff is giving them vouchers that they can redeem with different vendors because that way they get the choice. Like they can, you know, use – if they want a better-quality shovel, for example, maybe they use two coupons at vendor A instead of one coupon at Vendor B. It's more expensive but it's better quality.

And you're exactly right; us making the decision on the quality of tools is not the appropriate way to go if there is a choice, you know. And we do the same thing with seed fairs and things like that. So what we often do is bring a bunch of vendors together, give the vouchers to the beneficiaries, and they get to choose themselves what kind of seeds they want, what kind of tools they

want. And that, again, you know, from a dignity perspective, they're in charge. They've making the decisions. I mean, that's the more appropriate way to go and the way that we should be headed.

FLEMING: Anything else to add?

KAGUYUTAN: Actually, for Haiti I think something that's really exciting for us now at the Red Cross, we're working on a cash assistance program, just for those same exact reasons. We want to preserve the dignity of those beneficiaries and not have them feel like they're constantly taking handouts, and one way to do that is through cash assistance. And that hasn't started yet but we will at the end of this month where we're going to be basically donating cash to families who really need it, using a real exciting technology, possibly using their cell phones. So another cell phone technology.

FLEMING: Great. Great. So with that, you know, it's interesting. I've been involved in disaster assistance for, you know, over 12 years, and you start to think – well, you know a lot but I've learned quite a bit from the panelists today. So first of all, I want to thank you very much. And, please, let's give them a round of applause.

Thank you for coming.