

Responding to World Disasters



Item Code FS260026 April/06 Edition no 2

0845 300 1818

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 disasters, for example to:

- Unicef
- Oxfam
- British Red Cross
Disasters Emergency Committee
- Comic Relief Red Nose Day
- To a specially created Scout appeal (as we did in the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia early in 2005).

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 available through Programmes On Line (www.scouts.org.uk/pol).

Rather than only 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 Friendship Group Award.

The Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email info.centre@scout.org.uk www.scoutbase.org.uk

Examples of recent events where Scouting has responded include:

- In the Face of Terrorism (FS260066 downloadable from the Information Centre)
- the Tsunami disaster
- earthquake in India and Pakistan
- drought in east Africa.

At some stage, after an appropriate activity, we suggest that you explain to the Scouts that we are thinking especially about the impact of a serious event: the disaster and its effects, and about the need for justice, peace and development - for a better future. You will know best how to express this with the Scouts, depending on their ages.

After an activity, try to generate a discussion (again, in a way which is suitable for the ages of the Scouts), with a view to encouraging them to think what they can do to help. Be careful to say that Scouting is not a political organisation and that we must not be seen to be indulging in propaganda.

Our purpose, of course, is not to have an ideological debate but to help Scouts to express their feelings and to open their minds to the realities of global emergencies. We need to challenge short term thinking, hate and prejudice as well as to show solidarity with people who are the victims of natural disasters or other emergencies.

In summary

The three step process which we are trying to encourage is:

Raising awareness

- using suitable activities to make the necessary points
- explaining the context to the Scouts

Accepting responsibility for a better future

- discussion and debate

Taking action to make it happen

- personal commitment
- reviewing at intervals to consider further action

Publications

Bridging the GAPP (all the modules in this resource are downloadable from the GAPP web site. This site also has links to Christian Aid and other agencies)

Crossing Continents (Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council)

It's Not Fair (Christian Aid)

More information

British Red Cross – www.redcross.org.uk

Christian Aid – www.christian-aid.org.uk

Comic Relief – www.comicrelief.org.uk

Commission for Racial Equality – www.cre.gov.uk

Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council - www.cyec.org.uk

Disasters Emergency Committee – www.dec.org.uk

GAPP - www.gapp.me.uk

Global Gang – Christian Aid's youth site – www.globalgang.org.uk

One World Week – in October – www.oneworldweek.org

Oxfam – www.oxfam.org.uk

Oxfam International – www.oxfam.org

Quaker Peace and Service – www.quaker.org.uk

Refugee Council – www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Unicef UK – www.unicef.org.uk

Unicef (worldwide) – www.unicef.org

World Scout website – www.scout.org

Support

Help can be available from members of the GAPP Scout Fellowship (there may be some near you) or from your County Team, particularly the Assistant County/Area Commissioner (International). You can also get in touch with:

International Links Scheme – Waybrook@aol.com

International Office at Gilwell Park – international@scout.org.uk