

The challenges of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations in Pacific humanitarian responses



the power of humanity



About this report

This report was commissioned by Australian Red Cross and was prepared by Anna Young. Through this project, Australian Red Cross seeks to better understand the current trends, issues and best practice for reducing the amount of unsolicited bilateral donations (UBDs) during disasters.

These research findings and associated engagement of stakeholders through the project are intended to provide guidance for preparedness and response messaging activity in Australia moving forward, and can be utilised by the wider humanitarian community to reduce the incidence of UBDs in humanitarian emergency situations.

Executive summary

The influx of UBDs into emergency responses in the Pacific is a common occurrence, however there has been little research undertaken in this region to understand the origins or motivations behind these donations, nor the impact they have in the receiving countries. UBDs, also called Gifts in Kind (GIK) and unsolicited material donations are goods that are spontaneously donated after a disaster. They arrive unannounced or with very short notice, have incomplete or faulty paperwork, lack clearly defined consignee, are non-standard items and have incorrect packaging. During recent Pacific responses, UBDs have arrived from Australia and other nations in great quantities. During Tropical Cyclone (TC) Pam in 2015 over 70 shipping containers of UBDs arrived in Vanuatu. In the aftermath of TC Winston in Fiji in February 2016, Fiji received in excess of 133 containers.

While often donated by well meaning individuals and groups, UBDs may not be appropriate for the climate and culture of the receiving country, or meet the needs of those affected. They can put pressure on an already-stretched humanitarian supply chain system and incur many thousands of dollars in storage and handling fees. They can also have a substantial environmental impact if they need to be destroyed and become landfill in a region where safe waste management options are scarce. For these reasons amongst others, messaging around responsible donations globally focuses on promoting the message 'cash is best'.

There is currently very little preparedness messaging (i.e. that undertaken before disasters rather than during a response) in Australia around UBDs, rather the 'cash is best'¹ messaging is only relayed once an international disaster has occurred,

1. USAID CIDI coined the phrase "Cash is Best" in 1988.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
APEC	Australian Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARC	Australian Red Cross
CIDI	Center for International Disaster Information
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
GIK	Gifts in Kind
GoF	Government of Fiji
GoV	Government of Vanuatu
GoNZ	Government of New Zealand
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INSEAD	European Institute for Business Administration
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MP	Member of Parliament
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDRF	NGO Disaster Relief Forum (New Zealand)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SPC	Secretariat for the Pacific Community
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UBDs	Unsolicited Bilateral Donations
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
USA	United States of America
USAID/OFDA	U.S. Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

On February 20th, 2016, severe Tropical Cyclone Winston passed through Tonga's islands before cutting a path of destruction across Fiji. Approximately 350,000 people were affected by the Category Five system across all four divisions of Fiji; more than 32,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, and 250,000 people were estimated to be in need of emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance.

During this emergency response Australian Red Cross engaged in 'cash is best' messaging through social and mainstream media, more actively than ever before. It also collaborated with other agencies including the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)² and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Logistics Cluster in Fiji, to ensure there was consistency in messaging.

In reflecting on their response, Australian Red Cross realised the benefit to the sector as a whole of having a better understanding of UBD messaging in humanitarian responses, particularly in the Pacific, given our proximity and the proportionate role Australia plays in response operations in the region. By better understanding who donates goods, the reasons why they do, as well of the impact of these goods in the countries that receive them, the humanitarian community can strengthen its messaging to the public, before, during and after disasters.

As articulated by Holguín-Veras et al³, while the issues of UBDs are well known there have been few attempts to formally analyse their effects on humanitarian logistics and operations. Similarly, little is known about source and motivations of those who send UBDs in disaster responses. While limited in scope and by access to source data, this study seeks to contribute to the evidence base to inform successful communication strategies and mechanisms to reduce the incidence of UBDs following disasters.

In building this evidence base, the scope of this research was limited to recent Pacific responses but seeks to draw on experiences from global responses and best practice, most notably from New Zealand and the United States of America (USA). It focuses on the donation of material goods, and excludes analysis of spontaneous volunteers in humanitarian responses, but has looked to research on spontaneous volunteerism in Australia, as parallels can be drawn on motivations and influences in people giving their time or goods.

1.2 Methodology

This project was undertaken over a three-month period and consisted of the following components:

1. Desk review of current messaging and UBD policy, academic literature and lessons learned documents
2. Engagement with over forty individuals from humanitarian organisations, donors, National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) and those who had donated UBDs
3. A stakeholder workshop, the intent of which was to share the initial research and seek feedback. It also provided a forum to look at next steps for the management of UBD messaging in preparedness and response settings.
4. Drafting and validation of this report

As part of this project a UBD Pacific Response snapshot was also produced to quantify the impact of UBDs in recent disasters and again support messaging to dissuade would-be donors.

1.3 What are UBDs?

UBDs, also called Gifts in Kind (GIK) and unsolicited material donations are goods that are spontaneously donated after a disaster. They are often characterised by the below⁴:

- They arrive unannounced or with very short notice
- Have incomplete or faulty paperwork
- Lack clearly defined consignee
- Are non-standard items
- Have incorrect packaging

They are also items that may not have been requested by responding organisations and usually (or frequently) do not meet the needs of the affected populations.

While often donated by well-meaning people wishing to assist in the response, UBDs create considerable issues for governments and response agencies and put additional pressure on an already stretched humanitarian supply chain system. The costs of processing, transporting, sorting and storing UBDs can place a significant financial burden on receiving governments and response agencies, costing much more than the donated goods, many of which can be purchased locally and at a lower cost.

*The heterogeneity and volume of the flow are what make material convergence such a challenging problem. The heterogeneity of items reflects the diverse nature of the donors (i.e., individuals, groups, companies, and even public sector agencies), their radically different perceptions of the needs on the ground, and their varied levels of access to supplies. **The problem is that large numbers of donors send to the disaster area whatever they have on hand, under the assumption that anything and everything could be of use.***⁵

2. ACFID is the peak body for Australian Non Government Organisations (NGOs) involved in international development and humanitarian action.

3. Material Convergence: An important and Understudied Disaster Phenomenon, Natural Hazards Review, January 4th 2012. Jose Holguin-Veras, William H. Hart, Miguel Jaller, Luk N. Van Wassenhove, Noel Perez, Tricia Wachtendorf.

4. Logistics Cluster Vanuatu, General Guidance for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations

5. Material Convergence: An important and Understudied Disaster Phenomenon, Natural Hazards Review, January 4th 2012. Jose Holguin-Veras, William H. Hart, Miguel Jaller, Luk N. Van Wassenhove, Noel Perez, Tricia Wachtendorf.



Analysis of goods donated after TC Winston perfectly demonstrates this heterogeneity. UBDs sent to Fiji consisted of foodstuffs, assorted clothes and shoes of all varieties and sizes, chairs and tables, school books and desks, ropes, building materials, toys, tarpaulins, canvas, kitchenware, rescue equipment, wheel chairs, beds and blankets, towels, linen of all sizes, surgical clothes, stationary, tools for building and farming, sports gear and sports wear, chainsaws and brush cutters, electrical appliances, water pumps and generators, tents of many varieties, bicycles for children and adults, first aid kits, carpets and rugs.

It is important to note that family-to-family gifts can constitute a significant part of spontaneous donations during emergency responses. In some instances reported during TC Winston, where donations were met at the port of arrival, cleared through customs, collected and delivered to the families, they did not place a significant burden on the response supply chain system. Such donations in the context of this research would not be considered UBDs. As suggested by a posting on the Red Cross Facebook page during TC Winston: *'When done in the right way, with people on the other end to receive and process the goods, it is a very helpful way to assist Fijians in need, especially family and friends.'* Further consideration should be given as to how to support such donations.

2. UBDs in the Pacific context

2.1 TC Pam and TC Winston

As previously referenced, the scope of this research focuses on the two most recent disaster responses in the Pacific, TC Pam, which made landfall in Vanuatu on 13th March 2015 and TC Winston, which tracked across Tonga before hitting Fiji on the 20th February 2016. In both instances the governments did not convey a 'no UBD' policy.

During TC Pam, Vanuatu received over 70 containers (both 20 and 40 foot containers) of UBDs. Many of these containers took up valuable wharf and storage space and placed additional pressure on an already stretched humanitarian logistics response system.

Ten months after the cyclone there were still 18 containers of UBD's on the wharf, which had accumulated approximately USD\$1.5million dollars in storage, handling and container rental fees. The management of UBDs in Vanuatu was further exacerbated by the lack of a computerised system to receive and process cargo at the ports of entry.

Of the UBDs sent to Vanuatu, 50% of food items were expired by the time they were access and were destroyed at the cost of the government. As published in the Vanuatu Daily Post, a year after the cyclone, the Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) authorised that tonnes of food aid be dumped because they were expired, including cans of beans and tomatoes, canned fish (which take up 100 years to breakdown in landfill)⁶, packets of noodles and flour⁷. Moreover, a significant volume of the used clothes, shoes, bedding and other such items received in this way were inappropriate for the Vanuatu culture, living conditions and climate. These included high heels, heavy blankets, handbags and woolen knitwear amongst others.

The total cost to the Vanuatu government to manage the 70+ containers is difficult to quantify, but it is acknowledged that this money would have been better spent on the response and recovery efforts of the country.

Vanuatu's experience has changed their stance on UBDs. A year after TC Pam, NDMO Director Shadrack Welegtabit *urged all donor agencies to support response efforts through cash donations rather than solicited goods. He said an effective way to help next time disasters strike is through cash donations as it would allow relief supplies to be purchased near the disaster site, avoiding delays, steep transportation and logistical costs.*⁸

In an effort to avoid the issues experienced in Vanuatu, the Government of Fiji anticipated the influx of UBDs after TC Winston and made arrangement to manage their arrival.

At the time of writing this report, Fiji had received 133 containers, plus 8147 pieces of loose cargo (ranging from packages to pallets) totaling: 83,315 m3 of goods, enough to fill over 33 Olympic swimming pools.

In Fiji, a system was established for UBD management. Staff and assets (vehicles, handling equipment etc.) were requisitioned as part of the response arrangements, as outlined in the Disaster Management Act: All government resources will be at the disposition of the National Disaster Controller during an emergency operation⁹. This also extends to divisional and district assets¹⁰. Upon arrival, the UBDs were split three ways and sent to the three affected divisions and where possible, down to the provincial level. There is little information available on the recipients of the donations, whether or not markets were adversely affected by their influx or if there are UBDs in the provinces that have not been distributed due to their unsuitability. Anecdotal reports from the Government and Fiji Red Cross Society suggest that donations were well received by communities. Community members were not interviewed as part of this study.

While the responses in Vanuatu and Fiji are starkly different, the key difference in managing the influx of UBDs was capacity. The capacity of the Fiji Government, combined with the ability of the National Disaster Controller to requisition government resources from other government bodies to manage the UBD influx, was critical. Fiji had the human and logistical capacity to handle this volume of UBDs, but few other Pacific island countries have similar levels of resources.

It is important to acknowledge that considerable time and resources went into managing the arrival of UBDs into Fiji, with many thousands of people hours going into unpacking, sorting and distributing them. By contrast, receiving requested emergency relief items for distribution through established emergency supply systems such as those of the Red Cross Movement, UN Agencies and other humanitarian NGOs requires less effort and people hours. This is because the goods are of a known quality, are packed and labelled in a consistent manner, the quantity is agreed with those distributing the goods to communities before arrival and logistics preparations for receiving these goods can be planned in advance.

The capacity of Pacific island countries is notably different across the region, and so their ability to manage UBDs will vary significantly. It would be impossible for many countries to absorb the number of UBDs that Fiji received; therefore every effort should be made in the source countries to reduce the number of UBDs being sent to responses.

6. <http://sciencelearn.org.nz/Contexts/Enviro-imprints/Looking-Closer/Measuring-biodegradability>

7. Vanuatu Daily Post, Tonnes of expired Pam relief supplies destroyed, Anita Roberts Mar 8, 2016

8. Vanuatu Daily Post, Tonnes of expired Pam relief supplies destroyed, Anita Roberts Mar 8, 2016

9. Article 20, Fiji Natural Disaster Management Act 1998

10. Article 23, Fiji Natural Disaster Management Act 1998

2.2 Legal frameworks

Prior to TC Winston and TC Pam there were no, legal provisions regarding UBDS specified in either Vanuatu or Fiji's Disaster Management Acts or other relevant sectorial law (such as Customs Tariff Act).

Vanuatu has since undertaken a review of its Disaster Act, supported by the IFRC Disaster Law Program, in light of events that unfolded during TC Pam last year. Similarly the Government of Fiji has expressed its intention to review its national disaster risk management arrangements. These review processes seek to overcome legal and regulatory issues in disaster management including the influx of UBDS.

The Pacific Disaster Law Workshop on Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Disasters in the Pacific, organised by IFRC in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) was held in October 2015. Several of the recommendations from this gathering of Pacific NDMOs, Pacific Red Cross societies and other key stakeholders relate to UBDS including:

- Empower the host government to coordinate response,
- Engage with diaspora communities/ emerging donors to raise awareness/ educate on damage and bottle necks caused by unsolicited goods.
- Have standardised guidelines and mechanisms in place for the management and facilitation of international disaster assistance in the Pacific

A key outcome of the workshop was the development of the Regional Guidelines for International Disaster Assistance and Cooperation in the Pacific. The purpose of the Regional Guidelines was to provide a standard template for the Pacific that can be further adapted to suit individual country contexts.

The Regional Guidelines include: Article 16: Unsolicited Bilateral Donations

- 16.1 Unsolicited donations are strongly discouraged by [country] and such donations will not benefit from any of the exemptions, waivers and expedited processes contained in these Guidelines. [The relevant authority] shall clearly communicate its position on UBDS in writing and ensure it is publically available

- 16.2 All International Assisting Actors should actively encourage members of the public interested in contributing to international disaster relief of initial recovery to make financial donations where possible or otherwise donate only those types of relief goods expressed requested by the affected State.

The Regional Guidelines were endorsed by workshop participants and are currently still in draft form. The intent is to take the Guidelines through a formal adoption process via the Pacific Islands Forum, although Pacific countries that are reviewing their DM legal frameworks are already using them.

2.3 Sources of UBDS

There is very little information around sources and motivations of donors of UBDS to responses. In order to better target messages and change attitudes and behaviors these gaps will need to be addressed in order to create effective, well targeted messaging that changes attitudes and behaviors.

Globally, research has shown that many donors do not understand, or believe, that they are creating a problem¹¹ and this largely appears to be the case in the Pacific context.

When a disaster occurs people want to help those in need. In a study done on spontaneous volunteering in Australia nearly all respondents agreed that feeling the need to do something for those who needed help was very important (86.2%) or important (11.7%) in their decision to volunteer.¹²

The influx of UBDS is heavily influenced by media coverage. Supporter Service staff from the Australian Red Cross reported that the frequency of offers is linked to the amount of media coverage the disaster response is receiving. Similarly the study done on spontaneous volunteers reported that media coverage was the main prompt for people to volunteer (81.2% ranked it as very important or important).¹³

The amount of UBDS received in a response is also linked to size, nature and proximity of the diaspora community. In Australia and New Zealand, Pacific Islanders account for 1.3%¹⁴ and 7.4%¹⁵ of the population respectively. Donations of UBDS into Pacific responses include significant contributions from diaspora communities in Australia and New Zealand, many of whom have a strong culture of giving and helping family and friends.

11. Material Convergence: An important and Understudied Disaster Phenomenon, Natural Hazards Review, January 4th 2012. Jose Holguin-Veras, William H. Hart, Miguel Jaller, Luk N. Van Wassenhove, Noel Perez, Tricia Wachtendorf.

12. Research Report, A Survey of Spontaneous Volunteers, Australian Red Cross, Alison Cottrell.

13. Research Report, A Survey of Spontaneous Volunteers, Australian Red Cross, Alison Cottrell.

14. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011

15. Statistics New Zealand, Census 2013



NDMO Vanuatu

The culture of giving is coupled with a reticence amongst Pacific diaspora communities in Australia and New Zealand, to give cash. In some cases this reticence is linked to distrust in humanitarian organisations and governments that funds will be used in an effective and timely manner. In a study undertaken by the New Zealand NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF)¹⁶ after TC Winston, one of the recommendations was that: Communicating a 'money not goods' message during the response is not sufficient. The problem is not awareness, but trust. NDRF and its GoNZ¹⁷ counterparts – MFAT and MPP¹⁸ need to build trust with Pacific Island communities in New Zealand during planning and preparation.¹⁹

There is recognition in both Australia and New Zealand that humanitarian organisations need to be better at consolidating and disseminating their shared story. This includes sharing the challenges and difficulties of disaster responses as well as their overall impact. This will help to raise awareness and build trust in the humanitarian sector, which will strengthen calls to give cash instead of goods.

This research revealed that many of those who donated following TC Pam and/or TC Winston had some kind of relationship with the country. In the TC Pam response people who had traveled to Vanuatu, or had postponed travel due to the cyclone were keen to help by sending donated goods. In TC Winston, most of the UBDs that went through the official requests for tax and duty exemption process with the Fijian Procurement Office stated that they had close ties to a Fijian community. This included people who had worked there, had a family member who was Fijian or who had travelled there.

Additional sources of UBDs into Pacific Responses include faith-based groups, schools, private sector, community groups or communities that have hosted people under the Australian Seasonal Worker Program²⁰, similar to the Recognised Seasonal Employer programme in New Zealand.

16. The NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF) is a network of New Zealand's principal humanitarian relief agencies. The NDRF is convened and supported by the Council for International Development (CID) Humanitarian Coordinator.

17. Government of New Zealand

18. Ministry for Pacific Peoples

19. A Softer Landing Landing, Tropical Cyclone Winston After-Action, NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF), 2016

20. In Australia, the Seasonal Worker Program offers seasonal labour to employers in the agricultural industry, and employers in selected locations in the accommodation industry who can't meet their seasonal labour needs with local jobseekers. Participating countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

3. Messaging

3.1 Current practice in emergency responses settings

As acknowledged by the US Centre for International Disaster Information (CIDI), *'It is crucial immediately following a disaster to explain to the public and media clearly and persistently why monetary donations are the most effective, and provide information on how to make those cash contributions'*.²¹

Currently in Australia there is no formal coordination around UBD messaging in emergency responses. ACFID provides guidelines²² to its members and most organisations have 'talking points' or FAQs that they circulate to their staff, which are updated as the response progresses. This information helps inform customer support center staff, as well as other staff that interact with the public, to share the 'cash is best' message. A number of agencies also actively engage in messaging through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blog posts as well as mainstream media.²³

It is acknowledged by organisations that rely on public funding such as NGOs and the Australian Red Cross, that it can be difficult to have these conversations for fear of falling out of favor with their donors. In Australia there is no single website or hotline that 'would be' donors of goods are directed to, for example the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) or ACFID. In other countries, which exemplify best practice in this space, a centralised point of direction to have the 'difficult' conversations around why donating cash over goods is preferable.

In the Australian context, an individual who has collected or wishes to collect items for donation will ring or email one of the NGOs, Australian Red Cross, DFAT or ACFID. They will then receive the message that donations are not accepted and that cash is preferred, which is not what people want to hear. People will then often ring a number of organisations in an attempt to find someone who will accept and ship the goods they plan to have or have collected. Given the number of UBDs that arrived in Fiji, many become frustrated and arrange to ship the goods themselves.

Several agencies suggest other ways that people may be able to assist in order to try and harness their goodwill, such as undertaking a fundraising event²⁴, donating collected goods to a second hand shop such as the Red Cross Shops or through initiatives such as CARE Australia's 'Build a Pallet' project.²⁵ Several of the organisations spoken with also direct people to other organisations that may accept donations for shipment overseas, though this is not done in a formal manner with agreement by those organisations that they will be accepting donated goods for that response.

It was also noted during this research that the public would often contact their local Member of Parliament (MP) once they have begun collecting donations, in order to get assistance with the delivery process. There is an opportunity to work with MPs in order better inform them on the issues of UBDs and engage them to help spread the messages around 'cash is best'.

A review of response messaging among the humanitarian response community in Australia revealed that most organisations share a similar message when contacted by people wishing to donate goods. These are in line with the messaging that the ACFID recommends on why cash donations are preferable to goods-in-kind during emergencies.²⁶

After acknowledgement of people's generosity, messages focus on donating cash rather than goods, and generally fall within three main themes:

1. It allows purchases to be made near the disaster site therefore supporting local economies, reducing transport cost etc.
2. Cash is fast and flexible and allows relief organisation to provide what is most needed and relevant at the time and allows people to make their own choices
3. It prevents the logistics issues that are created by UBDs in responses such as clogged ports; warehouses and other components of the logistics supply chain as well as taking time and resources from the response.

These three themes are consistent with the messaging that the U.S. Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). USAID/OFDA Centre for Disaster Information (CIDI) has developed over the last 28 years.

When speaking with people who deal directly with the public on this issue in responses, many felt that they needed more information in order to tell a more compelling story and engage in more convincing discussions. This included more information around the issues of UBDs, regional examples and links with real time information during responses, in order for them to report on possible issues around UBDs in that response.

Most of those spoken to said that it was almost impossible to dissuade people from sending goods if they have already collected them, highlighting the importance of preparedness messaging to dissuade 'would be' collectors. Similarly those groups, who had started collecting donations using sites like Facebook to generate donations, were often unwilling to stop collecting once the process has begun. Most could not be persuaded by alternatives such as donating goods to stores such as Red Cross Shops.

21. USAID APEC Toolkit Summary, 2016

22. https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/overseas-emergencies-and-public-donations.pdf

23. <http://www.redcross.org.au/fiji-doesnt-need-the-shirt-off-your-back-.aspx>

24. <https://my.oxfam.org.au/>

25. <https://www.care.org.au/depot/>

26. https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/overseas-emergencies-and-public-donations.pdf

It has also been highlighted that there is a need to better educate and engage with the media so that they can help share the ‘cash is best, messaging. During the ARC TC Winston Appeal, there was a partnership with the ABC to promote the appeal and help the people of Fiji. In this instance, the ABC Emergency Broadcast Manager and journalists were briefed around the ‘cash is best’ messages, which were shared repeatedly throughout the appeal.

3.2 Preparedness messaging

There is currently little work done around UBD messaging outside of response settings in Australia for international disasters. Some work has been done in the domestic disaster space to raise awareness of the issues including the drafting of national guidelines.²⁷ Generally however, resources have not been allocated by any organisation to educate the public and key UBD source groups in a proactive manner. Many Australians are unaware of the issues created and believe that sending goods is a tenable solution.

During TC Winston an article published in the Herald Sun and Adelaide Advertiser generated by Australian Red Cross garnered some negative feedback on the Australian Red Cross Facebook page such as:

‘I think the article is totally unnecessary at this time. Not everyone has the means to donate money, but can go through their linen closet and wardrobes’.

‘That’s great if you have cash to spare. Most people have plenty of “stuff” but no cash. Also cash disappears into admin & govt charges very fast.’

‘This is disgusting why don’t the Red Cross volunteers go and distribute them?’

While these social media interactions created a starting point for important conversations they also illustrate the gap in understanding by the general public of the issues created when UBDs are sent into a response and highlights the need to better educate the Australian public about UBDs outside of response settings.

During engagement with key informants for this research there was unanimous agreement, that in order to reduce UBDs arriving in Pacific responses a commitment must be made to the work more rigorously on preparedness messaging.

3.3 Messaging best practice

The Unsolicited In-Kind Donations & Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods, Strategic Plan²⁹ commissioned by OCHA in collaboration with the Global Logistics Cluster and the Humanitarian Research Group, INSEAD³⁰ acknowledged the considerable issues around UBDs. It outlined seven key objectives, which it hoped ‘would be’ achieved over the coming years:

1. Create a reference entity for in-kind contributions
2. Inform all stakeholders about donations constraints
3. Strengthen the match between offer and demand
4. Promote the standardisation of items
5. Better channel unsolicited donations
6. Develop a quality insurance for the disposal of unused items
7. Engage all stakeholders for a greater transparency

Objective 2 articulates the need to have a communication plan in order to better inform ‘would be’ donors. This includes:

Advocacy campaigns such as those put in place by CIDI³¹ and the results obtained in the United States could be used as an example to define communication strategies with international coverage.

Established in 1988, CIDI is part of USAID/OFDA and its purpose is to guide and inform the public, including religious and community groups; diaspora; embassies; non-profits; corporations; businesses and governmental organisations about the most effective ways to support international disaster relief and recovery.

CIDI actively engage in preparedness messaging through social media, public service announcements, and mainstream media and through direct engagement with private sector, diaspora, community groups etc. They have community outreach staff that work with diaspora communities and other source groups. Their work has resulted in consistent messaging around UBDs by both the US Government and the majority of humanitarian organisations.

In emergency responses they have a telephone hotline and an email portal and the humanitarian community and government agencies refer all ‘would be’ donors to these resources. It is there that, as their Director Juanita Rilling explained, they are ‘able to have the difficult conversations’ with those wishing to send goods. They also create a response page on their website which provides guidelines for more responsible giving, as well as links to accredited organisations for cash donations in that response. They robustly message through social and mainstream media³² and engage with those that they become aware of who are collecting donations.

27. National guidelines for managing donated goods, A National Emergency Management Project August 2011, Government of South Australia

28. <http://www.redcross.org.au/fiji-doesnt-need-the-shirt-off-your-back.aspx>

29. Unsolicited In-Kind Donations & Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods, Strategic Plan, May 2013, commissioned by OCHA, written by Pierre Boulet-Desbareau

30. European Institute for Business Administration (INSEAD)

31. <http://www.cidi.org/>

32. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koQA5ipw1yk>



This commitment to preparedness and response messaging has proven successful: *Public education campaigns that encourage monetary support and discourage unsolicited material donations reduce the volume of inappropriate items sent to disaster sites ...the response to Typhoon Haiyan (known as Yolanda in the Philippines) in 2013 featured active public information campaigns and coordinated messaging emphasising that “cash is best.” As a result, USAID’s staff reported that while some unsolicited donations were received from the United States, it was a manageable amount. Based on this experience, there appears to be a plausible association between unified messaging from trusted sources and a reduction in unusable donations.*³³

In 2011, at the High Level Policy Dialogue on Disaster Resilience, APEC disaster officials committed to ‘educate the public, business, and government leaders on best practices for effective and appropriate donations to minimise the disruptions that unsolicited donations can have on disaster response efforts’³⁴. In order to help operationalise this commitment, CIDI has collaborated with APEC to create the ‘Promoting Appropriate Donations in APEC, Communications Toolkit’.

The toolkit provides guidance on practical issues on how to conduct media outreach and develop a donations communications campaign. The toolkit includes customisable outreach material (i.e: fact sheets, outreach emails and visual resources) that organisations and government agencies can use during and after disasters, that emphasise the benefits of monetary contributions, and instructions on how to use them. The CIDI website (www.cidi.org) also has a number of other tools and templates that complement the toolkit.

During engagement with stakeholders for this research it was agreed that Australia would benefit from building on the work of CIDI. Given the creation of the APEC toolkit and the other work by CIDI, efforts should be made to see how these might be applied to the Australian context.

New Zealand has begun to engage more proactively in preparedness and response messaging. MFAT, NDRF and other stakeholders are working to better engage with diaspora communities and other sources of UBDs out of New Zealand, prior to emergencies. During responses these stakeholders work closely together and where possible actively engage with the affected diaspora communities. ACIFD and NDRF continue to collaborate to ensure that synergies between the work and learnings of the two countries can be built upon.

33. Promoting Appropriate Donations In APEC , Communications Toolkit, 2016

34. Promoting Appropriate Donations In APEC , Communications Toolkit, 2016

4. Next steps

4.1 Considerations

While this research has focused on UBD messaging aimed at reducing UBD flow into disaster-affected countries, it does acknowledge that not all donations are useless or inappropriate. As highlighted in *The Unsolicited In-Kind Donations & Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods, Strategic Plan*³⁵ objective 3. *Strengthen the match between offer and demand*; there is a need to better harness people's generosity. In an effort to better do this, WFP is looking to create a platform that can match donations with humanitarian needs, which would be piloted in the Pacific.

It is also acknowledged that in some cases if offers can be delayed, there may be the opportunity to utilise these at a later stage, without putting stress on the initial humanitarian logistics response mechanisms. The above platform would go some ways to capturing possible donations and putting them on hold until such time as they may be useful.

While outside the scope of this research it is acknowledged that there needs to be greater guidance and preparation in order to better manage UBDs. This could include providing clear guidance on packaging, paperwork, associated costs for handling and distribution for those who cannot be dissuaded from sending goods and working with Pacific Island governments to define standardised list of possible donations which could be channelled through appropriately resourced and established agencies capable of managing the logistics of receiving these items. It could also involve the development of UBD management training modules, Terms of Reference (ToRs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for the management of UBDs in responses. IFRC Disaster Law Program continues to support Pacific governments to tighten their disaster risk management frameworks through policies and laws, which includes UBDs.

Finally while this research focus on the Australian context, there needs to be consideration given to how to best 'support National Societies and States in disseminating information to the public about the most appropriate donations of goods in the wake of a major disaster and to discourage the shipment of unnecessary and unsolicited items', as highlighted in the 32nd International Conference 2015, Resolution 6, Strengthening legal frameworks for disaster response, risk reduction and first aid'.

4.2 Recommendations

Below are the key recommendations that came out of this research and engagement with stakeholders through the workshop held in Melbourne.

4.2.1 Preparedness Messaging

- A commitment needs to be made in Australia to educate the public, business and government leaders on how to help effectively in disasters. This body of work should be led by ACFID in coordinating of the membership group, via support from DFAT. Building on the work of CIDI including the 'Promoting Appropriate Donations Toolkit in APEC', a joint communications strategy should be developed and committed to in the long term.
- This communication strategy should include commitments by DFAT, ACFID and humanitarian organisations to actively promote appropriate donations, through their networks and communities i.e. MPs reached through ACFID, shipping and airlines by WFP, churches through faith based organisations, and communities through Red Cross Branches amongst others, in both preparedness and response settings.
- In the short term, findings from this research and resources from CIDI including the APEC toolkit should be used to create robust messaging for the coming cyclone season 2016/2017. It is recommended that an emergency communications group be formed in order to advise and agree on the messaging that is produced.

4.2.2 Response Messaging and Coordination

- As part of the above body of work there is a need to establish a channel (such as website, hotline and dedicated email account) that all 'would be' donors of UBDs are directed to in responses.
- Creation of a taskforce to share and consolidate UBD information in emergency responses in order to:
 - Advocate with the responding government to message a no UBD policy or define key defined items required
 - Be able to feed back real time information for agency messaging
 - Better track the sources of UBDs out of Australia to target future messaging.

This could be led by ACFID in Australia and the Logistics Cluster UBD focal in the affected country.

- Create a system to capture UBD information in responses via the ACFID 3W's template
- Commission a study to better understand the sources of UBDs and the motivations of those sending them, in order to be better target future messaging
- Create opportunities and pathways to communicate the Australian aid community's response activities and their collective impact more effectively

Annexes

Annex 1: List of key references

- In-kind donations: who benefits?** by Moustafa Osman, disaster management expert Humanitarian Exchange, Number 49, January 2011
- Material Convergence: An important and Understudied Disaster Phenomenon**, Natural Hazards Review, January 4th 2012. Jose Holguin-Veras, William H. Hart, Miguel Jaller, Luk N. Van Wassenhove, Noel Perez, Tricia Wachtendorf.
- Mitigating the impact of gifts-in-kind: an approach to strategic humanitarian response planning using robust facility location**, By Elijah e. Ingram, B.S., United States Military Academy, 2005
- Research Report, A Survey of Spontaneous Volunteers**, Australian Red Cross, Alison Cottrell
- Logistics Cluster, Vanuatu, General Guidance for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations**, March 2014
- Unsolicited In-Kind Donations & Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods, Strategic Plan**, May 2013, commissioned by OCHA, written by Pierre Boulet-Desbureau
- A Softer Landing Landing**, Tropical Cyclone Winston After-Action, NGO Disaster Relief Forum (NDRF), 2016
- National guidelines for managing donated goods**, A National Emergency Management Project August 2011, Government of South Australia
- Global Centre Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs & Global GIK Steering Committee - **Emergency Response Coordination -Guidelines for GIK in Rapid Onset CAT III Emergencies**
- New Responses to Natural Disasters through Seasonal Labour Mobility Programs**, Rochelle Bailey and Roannie Ng Shiu, 2016, Australian National University
- Promoting Appropriate Donations In APEC**, Communications Toolkit, USAID and APEC 2016
- Promoting Appropriate Donations In APEC**, Communications Toolkit Templates , USAID and APEC 2016
- Promoting Appropriate Donations In APEC**, Communications Toolkit Summary, USAID and APEC 2016

Annex 2: Terms of reference – Unsolicited Bilateral Donations

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Research title	Unsolicited Bilateral Donations
Commissioning agency	Australian Red Cross Society
Timeline	July – September 2016
Commissioning manager	Steve Ray, Manager International Disaster and Crisis Response
Reason	To better understand the most effective community messages to reduce unsolicited bilateral donations and to identify communication delivery mechanisms.

1. Introduction

The Australian Red Cross ('ARC') is looking to better understand current trends, issues and approaches to reducing Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs) following disasters in the Pacific Island region. ARC is looking to contribute to the evidence base about successful communication messages and mechanisms to reduce unsolicited bilateral donations following disasters. It will use the research findings to identify the key messages for different target audiences and to fashion these in language that is easily assimilated by different audiences.

2. Background

On February 20th, 2016, severe Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston passed through Tonga's islands before cutting a path of destruction across Fiji. Approximately 350,000 people have been affected by the Category Five system across all four divisions of the Fiji; more than 32,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, and 250,000 people are estimated to be in need of emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance. The official death toll from the cyclone is 44, while a further 156 were reported injured. The Government of Fiji declared a National State of Emergency on February 20th, 2016 for 30 days, which was later extended to April 19th as the scale of destruction became evident.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRC, or the Movement), led by Fiji Red Cross Society (FRCS) mobilised in the days leading up to the cyclone, and has since played a vital role in the relief efforts. Australian Red Cross has made a substantial contribution to this response in terms of personnel, stock and funds, supporting both bilateral and multilateral response efforts.

For many international responders, managing UBDs – despite the goodwill behind them – can be a significant burden rather than a positive contribution in a disaster response. This is due to a raft of issues including transportation costs, customs clearance requirements, import taxes and duties, congested and challenging logistics in country, cultural appropriateness of donations and significant time and resources needed to process and distribute the donated goods. ARC seeks to educate the wider community of the negative effect of unsolicited donations, as well as contribute to a more open dialogue as to what is of most need by communities in the wake of a disaster. Effectively communicating the challenges posed by UBDs is difficult; public messaging in this area needs to be delicate and appreciative, to ensure continuity in appropriate donations to the right channels and achieving the best results for disaster affected populations around the world. This research is of particular relevance for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement as a whole, as primary supply channels for bi-lateral in-kind donations are often channelled through national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies³⁶.

3. Purpose of research

The purpose of this research is to better understand the most effective community messages to the Australian would-be donor community to reduce UBDs and to identify communication delivery mechanisms to prevent UBDs in disaster informed by analysis of the messaging used in 2016 Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji. This research will provide Australian Red Cross guidance in future emergency response operations in relation to reducing the numbers of UBDs.

The research findings will be used moving forward to analyse the messaging surrounding upcoming disasters, to be able identify trends quantities of donations, linked to effectiveness of messaging and better channelling of unsolicited donations.

4. Methodology and scope

- Desk based review of key messages, dissemination channels and supporting relevant documentation.
- Partners workshop to discuss the issue of UBDs in TC Winston
- Australian Red Cross (internal key stakeholders including from Media and Communications, International Disaster and Crisis Response, Marketing, Fundraising & Communication, Commercial marketing and fundraising, Community fundraising
- Representatives from partner agencies, including (but not limited to) Save the Children, World Food Programme, World Vision, Oxfam, CARE, AFID, DFAT and others.
- Consult with key internal and external stakeholders.

5. Deliverables

- **Output 1:** A detailed research methodology proposing the plan of action in carrying out the work.
- **Output 2:** A 15-20 page research report, including practice recommendations. Key research questions for consideration are indicated below:

Key Research Question	Guiding sub-questions
What type of UBDs did Fiji Red Cross and other key responding partners (including partner non-governmental organisations and the Government of Fiji) receive from Australia?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the source of the donations, how were they dealt with, what problems were identified? • What level of donations was facilitated through the diaspora community? What other sources of donation collections sprung up in the wake of the cyclone (e.g social media groups coordinating donations) • Clarify the difference between unsolicited goods and families sending goods to their extended families and how they impact logistics differently, able to recognise cultural context with greater ease. • What local communication avenues could be used to target diaspora community, for example if community fundraising? What local NGOs within the country receive donations (internally and externally) of the disaster afflicted country?
What is the legal landscape regulating UBD's in Fiji?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if any, legal provisions regarding UBD's are specified in the DM SOPs, Natural Disaster Management Act, 1998 (No. 21 of 1998), or any relevant sectoral laws (such as Customs Tariff Act). What are the key recommendations, if any, from the Disaster Law Programme to address regulatory provisions to minimise the influx of UBDs during disasters in Fiji and elsewhere? • Does Fiji ascribe to any legal or guiding documents which may have an effect on unsolicited bilateral donations (e.g. Draft Regional Guidelines for International Disaster Assistance and Cooperation in the Pacific)
Who produced what messaging during the Tropical Cyclone Winston response?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What agencies/organisations produced messaging around Unsolicited Bilateral donations following TC Winston? i.e. Fiji Red Cross, Australian Red Cross (Departments and phone contact with supporter services), DFAT, ACFID, Movement partners • What messaging did the Government of Fiji produce/disseminate around UBDs? • Where did they appear? • Was messaging between agencies consistent?
How do other organisations communicate UBD messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they feel comfortable sending out this message? What strategies do they employ? How do they frame it? Where do they redirect people to? • How do other donors deal with this issue? Are there best practice examples that can be drawn upon?
How effective were Australian Red Cross messages around UBDs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were some messages or communication mediums proven to be more effective than others or were picked up more than others? • Did we have more or less enquiries to Supporter Services about donating goods? Can we draw any links between volume of calls in TC Winston vs TC Pam? • Did the Australian public understand the rationale behind ARCs messaging; i.e. we were honouring the requests of the NS and region as specified in the guidelines?
What can we learn about more effectively using key messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the lens of this response, what have we learnt for moving forward? • What are the recommendations for future? • What potential other avenues exist for dissemination of messages (e.g Australian Business Council, Chambers of Commerce, etc) • Are there best practices for redirecting would-be UBD donations into valued contributions?

Testing of recommendations: The recommendations produced by the research report should be tested with key stakeholders to verify their validity. The process should be detailed in the research proposal.

- **Output 3:** A case study of two pages for external publication, including ‘lessons learnt’ for future disasters.
- **Output 4:** Plan of Action for public messaging against UBDs in Disasters.

6. Timeframe

It is anticipated that this research will commence in June, with final deliverables due by September 2016. Total number of working days to be negotiated with successful applicant.

7. Key contacts

Jessica Lees

Senior Program Lead
International Disaster and Crisis Response

Email: jlees@redcross.org.au
Phone: +61475149101

8. Key Selection Criteria of Researcher

- Demonstrated knowledge of humanitarian issues in the Australia-Pacific region
- Market research experience
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Experience carrying out similar kinds of research.

Australian Red Cross will assess proposals received against the following criteria:

Criterion 1	The proposal demonstrates a valid, effective approach to the delivery of outputs and addresses all research project objectives
Criterion 2	The proposal demonstrates technical, planning and financial capacity to successfully undertake the research project
Criterion 3	The proposal provides value for money in undertaking the research project
Criterion 4	The consultant/s is available to undertake the requirements within specified timeframe

9. Research management arrangements

A Steering Committee will have overall responsibility for the successful planning and execution of the Research Project; including through separate smaller Working Groups to:

- Review drafts of the desk based review,
- Finalise the research question /focus,
- Ensure the research is properly designed to produce high-quality research findings which address the Project Terms of Reference,
- Maintain the research project’s scope,
- Track project performance and accountability,
- Help resolve difficulties and advise on risk mitigation where necessary,
- Act as a body of review for deliverables
- Assist in the appropriate dissemination and promotion of the research.

External Consultants will be required to give fortnightly reports of progress to the IDCR unit and attend Steering Committee Meetings to update stakeholder representatives.

10. Guiding principles and values

The researcher will be required to adhere to, and be guided by, professional and ethical standards while contracted to Australian Red Cross. Review managers are to ensure that researcher has a copy of these standards. These standards include:

- The seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Code of Conduct (to be signed)
- Australian Red Cross Protecting Children And Young People Policy
- Australian Evaluation Society Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations

11. Fees, payment and submission terms

Fee to be negotiated with the successful candidate, with quotes to be included in the submission of EOI

The fee will be paid in 2 instalments, upon signing of contract and at receipt of final draft of research report, case study and Plan of Action

Submission of EOI is due by **COB 27 June 2016**.

Submission of EOI is to include a copy of the CV and a response to the selection criteria (no longer than 3 pages) to Jessica Lees, Senior Program Lead (jlees@redcross.org.au)

Notes

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