

Earthquake in Haiti

Leading U.S. Foundations Respond to the Crisis

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In the immediate aftermath of the January 12, 2010, earthquake in Haiti, the Foundation Center surveyed members of its Grantmaker Leadership Panel to gauge the reaction of top U.S. funders¹ to the unfolding crisis. More than half (53 percent) of current panel members responded. (See below for more details on the Panel.)

Overall findings from the survey suggest that a number of leading funders are considering a direct response to the crisis, with a primary focus on providing emergency assistance. Most of these funders expect to provide this support to intermediary organizations headquartered outside of Haiti. Not surprisingly, leading grantmakers that have provided funding related to Haiti and/or responded to other disasters in recent years were more likely to consider responding to this crisis.

KEY FINDINGS

Among the 120 foundations that responded to the Grantmaker Leadership Panel survey, 42 percent are considering providing assistance for relief and/or recovery efforts in response to the earthquake in Haiti.

Another 22 percent are “uncertain,” while roughly 36 percent do not anticipate providing a direct response at this time. Among grantmakers not currently considering a response, Thomas Wilfrid of the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation noted that his foundation was prohibited from providing support for activities not specified in its charter. However, he added that, “We welcome and encourage attention to this disaster by foundations with broader missions.” Among funders who are uncertain about their response at this point, Barry VanderKelen of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation indicated that, “Rather than collecting money locally, we direct donors to support the organizations that are on the front lines of providing relief.” Nonetheless, the foundation is the “lead agency for coordinating monetary donations at times of local disasters.”

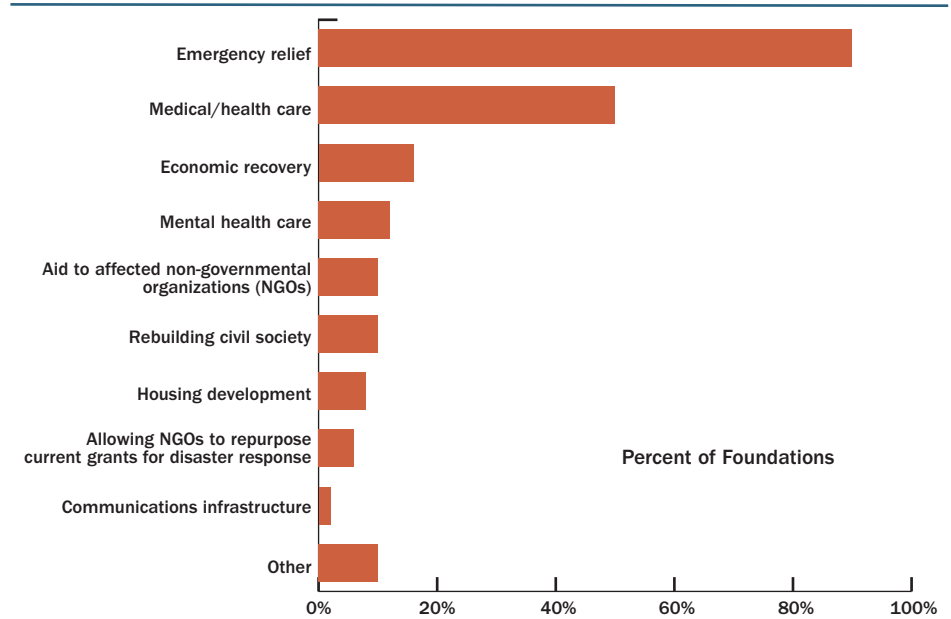
Grantmaker Leadership Panel

The Foundation Center’s Grantmaker Leadership Panel draws upon the expertise of chief executives at leading U.S. private and public foundations on critical issues of interest to the sector. The Panel serves to facilitate the rapid exchange of information among foundation leaders and with the broader sector to further important conversations in the field. Currently 225 foundation leaders participate, providing a regionally representative sample of the largest 400 independent and 200 community foundations in the country. Panel members hold assets totaling over \$100 billion and make grants totaling more than \$7 billion annually.

Among community foundations, 44 percent expect to provide assistance in response to the crisis, and nearly half have already established funds to collect contributions. Overall, nine of the 20 community foundations that expect to provide assistance have created funds, while another four are considering establishing such a fund. Reflecting in part the large Haitian immigrant community in its borough, Marilyn Gelber of the Brooklyn Community Foundation has established a fund and “will work ... to raise awareness and resources for local activity as well as in Haiti.” While the Fairfield County Community Foundation has not established a separate fund, Susan Ross noted that, “Foundations should help donors identify and support the most effective organizations engaged in recovery work after disasters.” She also highlighted the fact that community foundations “have the opportunity to encourage our donors to focus their support on recovery efforts after the relief phase is complete.”

Foundations that have provided funding related to Haiti and/or direct support in response to other recent disasters are more likely to consider funding in response to the earthquake in Haiti. Among the 19 respondents that have provided funding benefiting Haiti over the past decade (either in-country or through intermediaries), 74 percent are considering a response to the current crisis. Of the 79 respondents that have provided funding in response to other recent disasters—e.g., the Indian Ocean tsunami, Gulf Coast hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Pakistani earthquake, the September 11th terrorist attacks—56 percent are considering offering support for relief and/or recovery efforts.

Haiti Earthquake Response: Anticipated Foundation Funding Priorities by Major Subject



Source: The Foundation Center, January 2010. Figures based on the responses of 50 members of the Foundation Center's Grantmaker Leadership Panel.

Most of the 50 foundations that anticipate responding (60 percent) intend to direct assistance exclusively to intermediary organizations headquartered outside of Haiti. Among the remaining grantmakers, 14 percent expect to fund organizations based in Haiti, 12 percent anticipate funding both intermediaries and Haitian organizations, and the remaining 14 percent are uncertain. Gail Purvis of the Trull Foundation recommended that “foundations ... give grants for emergency relief and recovery to those organizations with which they have confidence and a history of giving.”

The vast majority of leading foundations responding to the crisis (90 percent) expect to focus on providing “emergency relief.” Among other priorities, half of responders (50 percent) expect to offer support for health and medical care. Nonetheless, several respondents referenced the need to support longer-term recovery efforts. For example, Stephen Heintz of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund identified the need among funders for “quick emergency response plus flexibility to respond to needs that only become apparent later.”

Among the 50 foundations considering a response to the crisis, 24 percent indicated that they would be interested in collaborating with other grantmakers, either directly or through regional associations or grantmaker networks. Terri Freeman of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region also suggested working “to develop coordinated responses in partnership with government.” Among the 26 respondents who were “uncertain” about whether they would respond, 19 percent might be interested in collaborating.

Close to one in five of the 120 foundations that responded to the survey (18 percent) have a formal plan in place to respond to these kinds of disasters. Twenty foundations (16 percent) noted that they had in-house expertise regarding disaster relief generally. Moreover, 37 percent of respondents indicated that they had in-house expertise regarding nonprofit organizations that may be particularly well-positioned to respond to this disaster.

Endnotes

1. The Panel does not currently include corporate foundations, which are likely to play an important role in the philanthropic response to this disaster.

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Source for all data:

[The Foundation Center](http://TheFoundationCenter.org)

For more information about this advisory, contact communications@foundationcenter.org.