Panel Overview

Responses to major natural disasters in the past decade have elicited extraordinary and revealing features of philanthropy. This panel will examine recent or relatively little studied responses to disasters in a number of countries around the world. In response to disasters, charitable organizations appeal for donations among the general public in developed countries. An important issue that this panel will investigate is the variation in responses to disaster relief in various countries and across countries.
In a globalizing world, individuals often reach across borders to assist others and address urgent needs. The response to major humanitarian disasters has been striking including the 2008 Chinese Earthquake and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. When a disaster occurs, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the global outpouring of voluntary donations of time, money, and resources can be significant, with $4.6 billion given to international disasters in 2005 alone (Relief Web, 2005). Yet, media coverage of disasters in the immediate aftermath and subsequent relief effort can play an instrumental role on whether people give to a disaster and how much they give. While a person’s decision to give to an international disaster can vary considerably across time and geography and perhaps even by the influence of the media within their local community or nationally, there has been little research to explore these cross-national differences.

This paper will examine how individual, household, organization and country-level factors affect disaster giving. Household-level datasets from several countries that contain information on charitable giving and household characteristics will then be linked to media archives to investigate the factors that influence a person’s decision to donate to a disaster and the influence the media plays in those decisions. Specifically, this project will address the following questions: How do individual, community attributes and country level factors affect giving to international disaster relief? How does the media affect households’ response to international disasters? How do the physical, cultural, political, historic, and economic ties between of a donor and recipient country affect voluntary contributions? How does the government response affect household contributions, and how are the public, private, and media responses interlinked? Does giving to international disasters crowd out giving to other causes?

This paper will use four country specific studies: the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, a module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics which includes information about the generosity of Americans, the Giving in Netherlands Panel Survey, a representative sample of Dutch households, the Charities Aid Foundation UK Giving, and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australian Survey. These studies include multiple waves of data with same individuals and households allowing for study of the impact of household and media coverage variables over time on giving to international disasters at the household-level. The data sources also contain information on a large range of socio-economic characteristics and attitudes that relate to charitable giving.

References

1 E.g., the comparable figure was approximately $15 million in 1999, $192 million in 2004, and $101 million in 2006.

2 According to recent research, nearly 30 percent of U.S. households (Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, 2005), 78 percent of Dutch households (Giving in Netherlands Panel Survey, 2005), 81 percent of UK households (Charities Aid Foundation, 2005), 54 percent of Australian households (Giving Australia, 2005), and 48 percent of French households (Centre d’étude et de Recherche sur la Philanthropie, 2005) contributed to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.


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“International Giving to the United States for Disaster Relief”

It is an understatement that Hurricane Katrina in 2005 exposed many inadequacies in the American system of responding to disasters. Lost amid the enormous post-Katrina analysis, comment and debate, has been the fact that 133 foreign governments and 12 international organizations offered $854 million in cash, commodities and other assistance to the United States for survivors and reconstruction. (Rodgers) Americans are, of course, more used to donating than receiving such assistance. Although the international offers of assistance paled in comparison to the $100 billion+ expended by national and local governments as well as private donors, the headlines that covered these international offers focused on the inability or unwillingness to accept these offers. In the end, $126 million was received, with only about half of that actually put to use (Solomon and Hsu)

This paper will examine the U.S. government’s record of receiving and using the international donations in response to Katrina. This will include the most successful project, International Aid to Katrina, a $65 million program funded through FEMA to a consortium led by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to offer case management assistance to families and individuals. (Bloom) In addition, the paper will review procedures adopted for handling the offers as well as later improvements, including the new concept of operations developed by FEMA, the Department of State, and United States Agency for International Development called the International Assistance System whose goal is to review, accept and reject, manage and distribute various forms of international donations.

There is a great deal of literature on international disaster assistance to less developed countries (Yang), but very little scholarship on assistance to wealthy countries and even less on the United States. (Kelman) News accounts and public interest groups have relied primarily on documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. (Rodgers, Soloman and Hsu) This paper will, attempt to fill this gap and make comparisons where relevant to the other literature on handling international donations. It will provide some context in a brief historical review (Hovois). Most data on the U.S. government response to international assistance will be obtained from the government sources (internal documents and published reports), newspaper accounts and interviews where possible.

References


Bill Rodgers, "Katrina Foreign Aid Handling Generates Criticism,” Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (May 15, 2007)


Facing Crises: Challenges and Opportunities Confronting the Third Sector and Civil Society

ISTR Ninth International Conference

2nd EMES-ISTR European Conference in partnership with CINEFOGO, Istanbul, Turkey, July 7-10, 2010
“China Red Cross relief for the 2008 Sichuan earthquake”

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of individuals, corporations, and foundations in disaster philanthropy in China, and assess the effectiveness of the resources that flowed into the Red Cross Society of China during the earthquake that occurred in Sichuan Province, China, on May 12, 2008. The Sichuan earthquake prompted an unprecedented global outpouring of donations and volunteers, with U.S. corporate donations reaching over $70 million in May 2008. U.S. corporations played a highly visible role in disaster relief and recovery. The earthquake has led to renewed interest in U.S. corporate philanthropy in China, and has raised important and timely questions about the uses and impact of disaster relief for long-term economic recovery, with implications for philanthropy world-wide.

The Red Cross Society of China, is one of the oldest nonprofit organizations in China. The study will shed new light on the role of domestic and international donations to the Sichuan Earthquake of 2008, including the sources, uses, and effectiveness of donations. The center will also examine the issues of strategic philanthropy versus responsive philanthropy after disaster strikes. The research project will cover the period before and after the 2008 earthquake, and will rely on multiple data sources including the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) database to investigate the sources, uses of donations, and their effectiveness in communities.

The research project will study the following key topics. An analysis of the existing environment, the household, community-level and regional factors that affected philanthropy during the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake. An overall assessment of the sources of donations including the role of the domestic and international corporations, compared to the role of individuals and foundations in the response to 2008 Sichuan Earthquake. An analysis of the uses of donations and volunteers and their impact on recovery and preparedness in the affected communities.

References

Ran Zhang, Zabihollah Rezaee and Jigao Zhu “Corporate Philanthropic Disaster Response and Ownership Type: Evidence from Chinese Firms’ Response to the Sichuan Earthquake” Journal of Business Ethics.


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3 The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC) estimates that U.S. corporate donations to the Sichuan earthquake reached $72 million in May 2008.
The European Commissions’ Humanitarian Aid Office and NGOs in disaster relief

Today, one of the causes that attract attention of the global society more and more often is disaster relief. Pomfret (1997) reported in the Washington Post that $200 million was spent in disaster relief in 1971. This number increases drastically in the following decades. According to the Development Initiatives (2006), global humanitarian assistance reached $18 billion in 2005. With the rise of humanitarian needs around the world, public and private sectors put their efforts together to be as effective as possible in meeting the challenges of disaster situations.

Public organizations around the world benefit from their partnerships with the private sector. Businesses, nonprofit/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual contractors initiate and contribute to the initiatives of the public sector, which also allows them to fulfill their own missions. Partnerships between public and private sectors take different forms depending on causes they support (Smith & Gronbjerg, 2006).

Humanitarian aid is one of the major causes that call for public-private partnerships. A very crucial role in humanitarian assistance today plays the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) that implements its activities through partnerships with major international humanitarian aid actors: Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, NGOs and agencies of the United Nations.

This paper will uncover the factors that are necessary for effective partnership collaboration process between government and NGOs in emergency disaster relief. It will also reveal whether effectiveness of partnership collaboration process between government and NGOs in emergency disaster relief is different from such partnership collaboration process in a non-emergency disaster relief. The findings of this study will be based on a survey and interviews of ECHO and NGO representatives that work together.

References:

