



# GOOD TRAVELS ADVISOR



## Tips for Helping Destinations After a Disaster

Unfortunately, natural disasters often strike the beaches, heritage sites and cities that we all care about. The good news is that today, word of urgent need travels around the world faster than ever, allowing people to respond quickly and generously. Travelers like you can play an especially powerful role in rebuilding the places you love and appreciate.

In addition to supporting international aid organizations, here are some other tips for helping after a disaster.

**Tip #1: Just go: inject travel dollars into the community and have an extraordinary experience**

When the time is right (and safe), travelers can do what they do best - go to and promote the

destination and put your travel dollars to work. Paying customers are vital to families trying to restore their livelihoods. Tourists can also visit and promote under appreciated destinations.

For example, in the case of Nepal in 2015-16, not only could you avail yourself of all of Nepal's usual wonders and renowned hospitality, you could experience, and even participate in, the inspirational recovery itself. Visitors had the unique opportunity to volunteer in the rebuilding of schools and community centers, share their expertise with local entrepreneurs to develop social businesses, and support job training and community development projects.

Dawa Tamang is one of 40 lodge and tea house owners and workers from hard-hit Langtang who participated in a special hospitality training program for displaced persons while at a temporary camp in Kathmandu.

Dawa was in the fields the moment on April 25, 2015. When Dawa rushed to the collapsed bakery where her husband worked, she knew he hadn't survived. She found her two boys and is now the sole parents and provider for the family. She took advantage of a training program offered by the Nepal's National Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NATHM) so she could advance her skills, continue in her husband's profession and provide for her family.



## Tip #2: Support immediate relief efforts but don't forget the long-term needs

The hours and days following a disaster, rescue personnel and local communities need to act quickly to minimize loss of life and provide medical assistance, food, clean water and shelter. This relief phase often gets the most support. Consider giving to organizations that focus on the long-term recovery, which is often harder, underfunded and has greater potential for change. Even save some of your giving and set a time six months after the disaster to look anew at needs that remain.

## Tip #3: Think about helping change the lives of those most disadvantaged

"Build back better" can be a giving goal, and crisis allows it: new resources are available for places that may have had very little. If this is a goal, really try to reach those most disadvantaged - those who had so little before the crisis.

Tourism Cares applied this principle in Nepal by investing in the training of six new blind massage therapists at the established [Seeing Hands Nepal Clinic](#); it was a chance to change the lives of those in tremendous need and their families. [Over 600,000 Nepalis](#) are partially or fully blind and access to education and employment opportunities are very limited. As a consequence, many visually impaired people cannot contribute to the family's income and are dependent entirely on support by family or community members. Visually impaired women are doubly marginalized due to their gender and disability. In addition, beliefs that blindness is a disease, or is contagious, and that it is punishment for sins committed in previous life still exists. Groups like Seeing Hands Nepal combat such beliefs and provide jobs and opportunities for blind people to live independently and contribute to society.

## Tip #4: Think about local charities and efforts as well as the big guys

Engaging local stakeholders is vital for continued recovery: it's their homes they are working to rebuild and they know their complex circumstances the best. There are very effective local groups that can also be trusted with your donation.

One particularly satisfying example of local effort is the [Chefs Guild of Sri Lanka](#) after the SE Asia Tsunami: they gave back doing what they do best, which was training 100 young adults, who might otherwise join the army or follow the hard fishing life, to find careers in food and hospitality.

## Tip #5: Be flexible and smart when making a contribution

After a disaster, nonprofits and community groups are working around the clock to help those affected by the tragedy. As we watch what is unfolding, many groups will set up funds and ask for donations. During this time, nonprofits will not have a complete strategy on how to respond to the crisis as they are still collecting information. While you want to make sure you are giving to the right organization, you also want to be flexible and give the nonprofit some space to do their work.

### Tip #6: “Give stuff” only when and if it makes sense

People want to provide tangible aid, like collecting blankets, clothes and food. These in-kind donations are generous gestures but may not be a good idea for disaster relief. Transportation and distribution of in-kind items are expensive and time-consuming. Food may rot during transportation and clothing may be culturally, religiously, or weather inappropriate. Instead, it may be better to organize a community garage sale and use the financial proceeds to support the groups working on the ground, allowing nonprofits to purchase items from local or regional businesses and boost the economy where rebuilding.

“We have been building community trails by involving tourism workers, who had become jobless after the earthquake.”

- Ramesh Prasad Dhamala, President, Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN)



Photo credit Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal

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