



# SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Led by Local Communities

## BACKGROUND

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the leading Jewish organization working to promote human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS promotes civil and political rights; advances sexual health and rights; defends access to food, land and water; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide.

## CRISIS RESPONSE OVERVIEW

AJWS responds to humanitarian crises by mobilizing financial resources for recovery efforts led by local people, who know how to best assist their own communities. Our emergency relief grantmaking is grounded in our commitment to human rights and social justice. As a result, we prioritize support for local, grassroots groups that work to meet the unique needs of historically marginalized communities in the wake of disasters—including women, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, LGBTI people, people living with disabilities, the elderly and people living in remote or isolated areas.



In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, AJWS's support enabled first responders to assist injured survivors. *Photography by Evan Abramson*

## SNAPSHOT OF AJWS'S CRISIS-RESPONSE APPROACH

### PHASE 1

**EMERGENCY RELIEF:** Traditional relief grants to provide for the immediate needs of those most affected in the aftermath of the disaster

### PHASE 2

**TARGETED SUPPORT:** Population-specific grants to assist those traditionally excluded from humanitarian response

### PHASE 3

**LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL CHANGE:** Advocacy and research grants to support civil society to engage in structural change and ensure future accountability in humanitarian response

AJWS has mobilized its constituents to respond to some of the largest natural disasters and crises of our time, as well as less well-known but devastating local crises in our top-priority countries. In the last 12 years, AJWS has contributed over \$23 million to humanitarian responses around the world. A few examples:

- After the Indonesian tsunami of 2004, AJWS provided more than \$10.8 million to grassroots organizations assisting communities in five affected countries.
- When Haiti was ravaged by a massive earthquake in 2010, AJWS granted \$5.7 million to community-based organizations to aid recovery efforts over five years, targeting populations that had been left out of mainstream humanitarian mechanisms.
- In April 2015, AJWS launched a \$2.5 million response effort to the Nepal earthquakes that has enabled survivors in the most remote regions to rebuild and recover.
- During the height of the crisis in Darfur and its aftermath, AJWS was the leading Jewish organization supporting human rights activists in Sudan—dedicating more than \$5.5 million to this effort—and mobilizing Americans of diverse backgrounds to call for an end to the genocide.

## OUR APPROACH

AJWS uses a human rights approach to respond to humanitarian crises and natural disasters. We make rapid and flexible grants to support immediate relief and longer-term rehabilitation. In addition, we make grants to address structural challenges—such as caste discrimination preventing Dalits from accessing aid in Nepal, or a lack of government accountability for distributing aid fairly in Haiti—and violations of human rights, which often increase in scale and severity during the aftermath of a crisis or disaster. For example, AJWS grantees distribute food and medical supplies, rebuild homes and provide psychosocial support. At the same time, such grantees also work to identify and address gender-based violence in displacement camps and combat stigmatization based on sexual orientation or gender identity, ensuring that historically marginalized groups can access the services and support they need.

As one of the only human rights grantmakers that supports locally-driven humanitarian efforts, AJWS plays a unique and valuable role in post-crisis response. AJWS's strategy incorporates deep contextual analysis, enabling us to target support to historically marginalized populations that are frequently ignored by mainstream humanitarian responses. Given the systemic injustices faced by these populations, AJWS's approach is about more than recovery from crises; it is about rebuilding societies holistically, enabling all people to realize their human rights.

## CRISIS RESPONSE IN ACTION: SHORT CASE STUDIES

### Emergency Relief

#### ***Supporting Tibetan Refugees To Rebuild Homes after Nepal's Earthquakes***

In a remote, mountainous village in Nepal, the homes of many Tibetan refugee Buddhist nuns and monks were destroyed by the earthquakes in 2015. With support from AJWS, this community received training on how to engage in a resilience-focused rebuilding process. As a result, the community is now using local materials to construct stronger, earthquake-resistant structures. This grant will also support the construction of a road that will connect the community to the main highway, giving them access for the first time to supplies that they need in their day-to-day lives.



AJWS grantees support a remote Nepali community to rebuild after the 2015 earthquake. *Photograph by Aaron Acharya*

#### ***Helping Displaced Families Weather Severe Flooding in Sri Lanka***

During a dangerous monsoon season, internally displaced persons (IDP) in Sri Lanka struggled to access sustainable sources of food—and many lost their shelter. With support from AJWS, a local grassroots organization provided shelters for 720 displaced families. The organization also distributed weekly food rations to families living in 36 IDP camps in the region to ensure that they would receive adequate nourishment throughout the rainy season.

### Targeted Support to Historically Marginalized Populations

#### ***Advocating for Non-Discrimination in Ebola Medical Service Provision in Liberia***

During the Ebola crisis in Liberia, some communities believed in a myth that the virus was caused by LGBTI people and was a divine punishment for the country's sins. AJWS supported a Liberian organization to advocate for equitable medical services and psychosocial support to LGBTI people in Montserrado County. The organization worked with key stakeholders and religious leaders to counter harmful myths about Ebola. The organization's peer educators also worked to ensure that LGBTI people living with HIV were able to continue accessing much needed anti-retroviral treatment during the Ebola epidemic.



AJWS grantee ADWAN trains women recovering from the earthquake in Nepal to build smokeless stoves. *Photograph courtesy of ADWAN*

### ***Providing Psychosocial Support to Survivors of Violence in the Aftermath of the Earthquakes in Nepal***

The prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) surged in Nepal after the earthquakes in 2015. Insecure living situations and a reduced sense of law and order—common in displacement camps and in the wake of disasters—exacerbated the existing risks of violence that women and girls face. AJWS supported a community-based organization in rural Nepal to construct five new safe houses for GBV survivors, where they now receive the shelter, psychosocial support and legal counseling needed to recover and plan their next steps.

### **Long-Term Changes to Power Structures**

#### ***Ending Impunity in Post-Earthquake Nepal***

Challenges like GBV existed long before the earthquakes hit, in part because of inadequate judicial systems. Especially in rural areas, women did not know their rights or simply could not afford to travel long distances to bring their cases to court. To create lasting change, AJWS supported two organizations in Nepal working to provide free legal aid to rural survivors of abuse, as well as to overcome the long-standing barriers that had kept women from accessing justice. For example: These groups set up new mobile legal clinics and worked with government officials and police so they can handle GBV cases more quickly and fairly.

**COVER** Members of AJWS grantee BAWODA, in Liberia, raise awareness about Ebola in a marketplace in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. *Photograph by Jonathan Torgovnik*

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