

Myth #5: The more money raised, the faster the response will happen

There is a tendency to simplify humanitarian aid and assume that the more money that is raised, the faster and less complex the response will be. However, money is not the only resource needed when it comes to a disaster response. Unfortunately, natural disasters and humanitarian crises are by their very nature complex situations which take more than money to fix. No matter how generous donors are, myriad factors can delay work in the field:

- **Access** – Physical devastation such as damaged airports, seaports and roads can clog the aid pipeline. Bad weather might also be a factor if it prevents aid workers from reaching a disaster zone. Even a fleet of brand new aircraft cannot deliver aid if there is no runway to land on!
- **Local political stability** – Weak governments can impede the efficiency of relief work. A lack of political will to support a disaster response can cause aid workers to find themselves “swimming in mud” to get the necessary permissions, permits and paperwork to do their work.
- **Poverty** – Poor countries often lack infrastructure such as health systems and transportation networks that provide an operational foundation upon which to mount a disaster response.
- **Lack of coordination** – The presence of new and inexperienced organizations who do not participate in the existing coordination mechanisms can lead to problems of duplication and overall inefficiency.

The Haiti Earthquake:

The Haiti earthquake response is a case in point. Donors were incredibly generous, but a year later find it difficult to understand why more than a million people lack safe housing and are still struggling to survive. All of the above factors are causing slow progress; shelter issues are particularly daunting.

World Vision had funds to start building transitional shelters immediately; however, we faced challenges such as:

- **Land tenure:** NGO’s cannot build homes when the ownership of land is in question; only the Haitian government can clear up the legal issues involved in land tenure. So far, it has been unable to do so quickly enough to provide safe land to rebuild homes for the vast majority of Haiti’s homeless.
- **Rubble removal:** In a heavily urban setting, this work is no small task. There is a shortage of heavy machinery sufficient to complete the task with any level of efficiency. Also, there are pre-existing factors such as a lack of building codes (or adherence to national building codes) and a lack of disaster-resilient materials available for construction, resulting in poorly planned and constructed infrastructure.

Getting it right:

Finally, it’s worth noting the importance of taking extra time upfront to get it right. In Haiti, World Vision invested the time needed to consult earthquake survivors to get their input into the design of our transitional shelters. While this may have lengthened the construction timeline, we wanted to ensure our shelters would be well-received and appropriate to the local environment.

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Despite the challenges, progress is being made. As of mid-December, World Vision has constructed nearly 640 transitional shelters, and are committed to further construction throughout Port-au-Prince, La Gonave, and Corail. Ultimately, over the course of the next three to five years, World Vision's goal will be to see families in safer, more permanent communities with homes, functioning schools, and jobs that allow them to support their families.