

groups say. An official with the U.S. Fund for UNICEF said the group raised about \$3.5 million for relief in the nine months following the Dec. 26, 2003, earthquake in Bam, Iran, that killed more than 26,000 people. But in just a matter of days, it raised more than \$30 million for victims of the tsunami that occurred exactly a year later.

"The generosity of the American public has been absolutely terrific," said Carolyn Miles, chief operating officer for Save the Children. "We are absolutely ecstatic about that ... but we are increasingly concerned that this will impact a lot of the other emergencies around the world."

So far, officials with several aid groups said, the tsunami giving frenzy actually seems to be boosting donations for the world's other humanitarian trouble spots.

But Miles worries about months from now, when she fears tsunami donors might feel a financial pinch or suffer from giver's fatigue.

Opportunity?

At the same time, though, aid groups such as Save the Children and CARE see potential for future success, because the tsunami crisis has brought in many first-time donors.

"Once they get engaged with this kind of giving, they tend to stay engaged," said Rackley, of CARE.

After the initial rush to focus on their emergency tsunami efforts, some groups now appear to be emphasizing a larger picture of humanitarian need around the world.

"It does provide an opportunity for us all to talk about all of the other work we're doing, and I think we're starting to do that," Save the Children's Miles said.

One group, Doctors Without Borders, may be going even further. It is telling prospective donors it has raised enough tsunami relief money — roughly \$50 million — for its extensive South Asian relief efforts. Rather than seeking more such donations, the group is asking on its Web site for more open-ended contributions that can be used for future tsunami-like emergencies, or for ongoing operations in more than 70 countries where the organization works.

"This allows us to respond to emergencies on a needs basis, independently, not relying on an outpouring of support for a specific country," said Catrin Schulte-Hillen, program director for Doctors Without Borders. "It was really a matter of being transparent for the donors. ... The fact that we have a lot of unrestricted funds makes us feel very comfortable doing this, because we still can use unrestricted funds" for excess tsunami costs.

Continued

1.

But such funding also may be needed to save lives elsewhere, where aid groups find it is not always easy to draw media coverage or donations.

RELATED STORIES

- [How to Help Tsunami Victims](#)
- [Amid Asia's Crisis, Congo Gets Little Aid](#)
- [Powell Puts Sudan on Notice Over Darfur](#)
- [Uganda's Northern War Resumes After Truce Runs Out](#)
- ['Hotel Rwanda' -- Jan. 9, 2005](#)
- [Why AIDS Keeps Spreading in Africa](#)

RESOURCES

- [Tsunami Extended Coverage](#)

MORE HEADLINES

- [Abbas Wins Palestinian Vote in Landslide](#)
- [Will Tsunami Giving Affect Other Crises?](#)
- [U.S. Relief Chopper Crashes in Banda Aceh](#)

"Prior to the events of September and October 2001, we had issued an emergency appeal for Afghanistan," said Lisa Szarkowski, a spokeswoman for UNICEF in the United States. "Children were freezing to death ... and we couldn't get the time of day from the news media."

Worldwide Crises

U.S.-led post-invasion efforts since have made inroads in Afghanistan, but there remain crises elsewhere in urgent need of funds.

- Humanitarian officials fear a new famine may be taking hold in Ethiopia.
- Elsewhere in Africa and around the world, HIV/AIDS has claimed millions of lives, created countless orphans, killed off much-needed caregivers, and left victims at the brink of death unless they gain access to care.
- Relief efforts continue in Haiti, where storms, floods, AIDS and political instability have killed thousands and put additional lives in jeopardy.
- Deadly factional fighting has driven millions of civilians from their homes in northern Uganda and the Darfur region of Sudan — a crisis Szarkowski said recently gained media coverage following humanitarian groups' years of "beating the drum" for attention.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, factional fighting aggravated by neighboring countries' aggression has claimed millions of lives since 1998 and left millions of innocent civilians in the crossfire raped, orphaned and homeless, watchdog groups say.

'Disaster Is Not Acknowledged'

On Thursday, Congo's permanent representative to the United Nations called for international help during an appearance on ABC News' 24-hour streaming channel, ABC News Now.

"The DRC for the moment is really a humanitarian disaster," said the ambassador, Atoki Ileka. "That disaster is not acknowledged because I think there is not much media coverage of what's going on in the DRC.

"Take, for example, what's going on in South Asia, in the horn of Africa, with the tsunami," he added. "You see all those relief efforts. Let me say first that my heart goes out to all those who lost lives in this natural disaster. ... But you see the world leaders are responding immediately to the tsunamis crisis. And we haven't seen that in regard to the DRC."

Continued

(Page 3 of 3)

Aid workers understand why natural disasters like the tsunami draw more immediate attention and sympathy than a man-made crisis such as the carnage in Congo.

"People tend to bring judgments to those situations," said UNICEF's Szarkowski. "When something like this [tsunami] happens and it's almost an innocent disaster, there's no stigma attached to it."

There also may be practical reasons for donating to natural disaster relief rather than war victims, said Schulte-Hillen of Doctors Without Borders.

"A natural disaster is an event in which everybody can imagine that their help can actually lead to a permanent change for the population," she said, "but conflict is more complicated than that."

The same practical limitations may apply to a chronic problem like AIDS. Unlike with starving tsunami victims, Szarkowski said, "people can't send a high-protein biscuit to solve it."

Remoteness and danger of crisis locations also can inhibit fund raising, experts said.

But none of those factors means aid is less needed in those cases.

"A life lost in the Congo is every bit as precious as a life lost to the tsunami," Szarkowski said. "It's just a matter of geography and circumstance."

'Unprecedented Natural Disaster'

But there may be more basic reasons for the public's unprecedented tsunami aid.

"This was an unprecedented natural disaster, and you've seen an unprecedented response from the public," Szarkowski said.

"The crisis is larger," said Rackley, of CARE. "It happened across more countries. It happened at Christmas time. Maybe for Americans there was the factor of foreign visitors being on vacation and getting caught up in it as well."

The heavy news coverage bringing personal stories of suffering and survival into Americans' living rooms, and conveying the scope of the disaster, may be the biggest factor, some say.

"I think the coverage has definitely come into play," said Miles, of Save the Children. "And just the sheer scope. You really have never had ... certainly in the memorable past, a natural disaster that has affected so many countries at once and has had such dramatic impact all at the same time."