

World Disasters and Terrorism



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Introduction

We are all faced – sometimes it seems on a daily basis – with the need to respond to natural disasters, such as famine, or the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, or matters of peace and war.

The immediate response is to want to do something to help our fellow human beings. Often, time is pressing with the needs of the people involved being literally a matter of life or death.

Individuals will want to respond in the best way they can but what should Scouting do?

This programme material has been devised to help Leaders in The Scout Association to provide a measured approach to the response to emergencies and disasters - not just when they happen but as part of our balanced programme.

It would be wrong for Scouting to have nothing to do or say. As an educational movement, we all will want to help our Scouts to come to terms with these events and to think about what each may do as an individual to make the world a better place where such events are quickly dealt with or eliminated altogether if possible.

Young people may have been exposed to images on the media which are deeply upsetting, the consequences of which are uncertain. It may be that there are members of the Scout Group who have lost loved ones or who are otherwise closely involved in the tragedy. We should of course be especially careful here. For example:

- be careful not to condemn all those of particular race or cultural or religious background

- arrangements could be made to express sympathy to any families known to us and directly affected by the incident

What to do?

Give money

You can donate money for the benefit of those affected by disasters, for example to:

- Unicef
- Oxfam
- British Red Cross
Disasters Emergency Committee
- Comic Relief Red Nose Day
- To a specially created Scout appeal (as we did in the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia early in 2005).

Programme Ideas

But Scouting is not a relief agency; our job is to work with young people. Programme items for different age ranges can be planned so as to incorporate them into the meeting in a way you find comfortable. Some ideas are available in the publications listed in this fact sheet. Ideas are also available through Programmes online (www.scouts.org.uk/pol).

Rather than only respond to a particular incident, why not have an ongoing programme of suitable activities? This could involve:

- visits
- talks
- involvement in the world family of Scouting
- working towards the International Friendship Group Award.

Examples of recent events where Scouting has responded include:

- the Tsunami disaster
- earthquake in India and Pakistan
- drought in east Africa.

At some stage, after an appropriate activity, we suggest that you explain to the Scouts that we are thinking especially about the impact of a serious event: the disaster and its effects, and about the need for justice, peace and development - for a better future. You will know best how to express this with the Scouts, depending on their ages.

After an activity, try to generate a discussion (again, in a way which is suitable for the ages of the Scouts), with a view to encouraging them to think what they can do to help. Be careful to say that Scouting is not a political organisation and that we must not be seen to be indulging in propaganda.

Our purpose, of course, is not to have an ideological debate but to help Scouts to express their feelings and to open their minds to the realities of global emergencies. We need to challenge short term thinking, hate and prejudice as well as to show solidarity with people who are the victims of natural disasters or other emergencies.

Sometimes disasters are a lot closer to home. Leaders in The Scout Association are ever increasingly facing the need to help Scouts to come to terms with the impact of terrorism, brought so much into focus by the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and subsequent attacks such as the Bali Bombing and the attacks on railway stations in Spain in March 04 and in London in the summer of 2005.

Terrorism takes many forms and these impact on many other countries and communities from Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe, to the Middle East and south east Europe.

Background

Underpinning the material in this pack are references that are important to Scouting:

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Constitution of UNESCO, 1945, first paragraph

Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

We should take care, in inculcating patriotism into our boys and girls, that it is a patriotism above the narrow sentiments which usually stops at one's own country, and thus inspires jealousy and enmity in dealing with others. Our patriotism should be of the wider, nobler kind which recognises justice and reasonableness in the claims of others and which leads our country into comradeship with ... the other nations of the world.

The first step to this end is to develop peace and goodwill within our own borders, by training our youth of both sexes to its practice as their habit of life; so that the jealousies of town against town, class against class and sect against sect no longer exist; and then to extend this good feeling beyond our frontiers towards our neighbours ...

Robert Baden-Powell, 1929

Scout Associations throughout the world have responded to various terrorist attacks by offering sympathy and support.

It would be wrong for Scouting to have nothing else to do or say. As an educational movement, we all will want to help our Scouts to come to terms with the events and to think about what each may do as an individual to make the world a place where terrorism no longer flourishes.

Some considerations

Many young people will have been exposed to images on the media which are deeply upsetting, the consequences of which are uncertain. It may be that there are members of the Scout Group who have lost loved ones or who are otherwise closely involved in the tragedy. We should of course be especially careful here. For example:

- be careful not to condemn all those of particular race or cultural or religious background
- arrangements could be made to express sympathy to those families known to us and directly affected by the incident
- Scouts can be encouraged to send cards and letters to appropriate groups
- your Group could be represented at religious observances (memorial services, for example), if welcomed by the family
- for the future, anniversaries are key times and should be planned for and handled with sensitivity

The impact of a terrorist incident on the general public is immense, even without direct involvement. Dealing with it at Scout meetings is difficult. It is important to:

- acknowledge the emotional state of adults and young people and the effect on home and social life for families and individuals
- allow time and space when needed
- remember that some Leaders may not wish or feel able to be directly involved in these activities
- Take care that the burden of support does not may fall disproportionately on too a small number of adults

- Recognise that the incident may act as a trigger to those people (especially children) who are emotionally vulnerable, with resulting difficulties in behaviour and relationships

A Scout Prayer for Peace
(Link hands)

O God, we join with Scouts throughout the world to pray for Peace. Grant that through Scouting we can come to understand each other better and learn to live together in harmony.

In summary

The three step process which we are trying to encourage is:

Raising awareness

- using suitable activities to make the necessary points
- explaining the context to the Scouts

Accepting responsibility for a better future

- discussion and debate

Taking action to make it happen

- personal commitment
- reviewing at intervals to consider further action

Publications

Bridging the GAPP (all the modules in this resource are downloadable from the GAPP web site. This site also has links to Christian Aid and other agencies)

Crossing Continents (Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council)

It's Not Fair (Christian Aid)

More information

British Red Cross – www.redcross.org.uk

Christian Aid – www.christian-aid.org.uk

Comic Relief – www.comicrelief.org.uk

Commission for Racial Equality – www.cre.gov.uk

Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council -
www.cyec.org.uk

Disasters Emergency Committee – www.dec.org.uk

GAPP - www.gapp.me.uk

Global Gang – Christian Aid's youth site –
www.globalgang.org.uk

One World Week – in October –
www.oneworldweek.org

Oxfam – www.oxfam.org.uk

Oxfam International – www.oxfam.org

Quaker Peace and Service – www.quaker.org.uk

Refugee Council – www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Unicef UK – www.unicef.org.uk

Unicef (worldwide) – www.unicef.org

World Scout website – www.scout.org

Support

Help can be available from members of the GAPP Scout Fellowship (there may be some near you) or from your County Team, particularly the Assistant County/Area Commissioner (International). You can also get in touch with:

International Links Scheme –
international.links@scouts.org.uk

International Office at Gilwell Park –
international@scout.org.uk