

THE CRISIS CONTINUUM

In times of disaster and complex humanitarian emergencies, relief groups like Heart to Heart International work to alleviate suffering. As disaster planning has evolved over the last decade, Heart to Heart has begun to establish its own model for understanding the best way to respond during the various phases of a crisis. We call this model the Crisis Continuum



READINESS: We strive to be ready whenever disaster strikes. Some of our readiness activities include enhancing our transportation partnerships, so we can launch shipments of aid within 48 to 72 hours after a crisis has emerged; procuring sufficient quantities of supplies to provide food, water, shelter and essential medicines for several thousand displaced people anywhere in the world; strengthening our humanitarian network through relationships with other relief groups; and training skilled volunteers to assist us in any of the remaining four phases of a crisis.



RESPONSE: After a crisis has emerged, our Crisis Response Team (CRT) strives to be on the ground within the first 24 hours, if possible. These relief experts help Heart to Heart establish a supply chain and distribution network, make contact with the appropriate government agencies handling the disaster response, and assist us in providing accurate information to our stakeholders. The CRT also identifies the problem Heart to Heart will address through our response, helps us outline a strategy to address the problem, determines the resources necessary to successfully respond, and leads the implementation process of our strategy. Further, the CRT monitors our execution and provides timely performance evaluations, so we can adjust our response effectiveness. We are generally in this phase until essential services are back on line and the situation has been stabilized.



RECOVERY: Once stabilization has been achieved, Heart to Heart starts looking for ways to enhance essential services at the local level. We begin to seek opportunities to pair skilled volunteers with their local counterparts as a way of bolstering expertise and doubling efforts. We also work to make ourselves as useful as possible to local officials – anything to help the recovery process gain momentum. Each recovery is different, but we are generally in this phase until the local officials reassert control over essential services and no longer require our assistance. We thank them for allowing us to help them and we move on.



REBUILDING: As we begin to see signs that recovery is happening, Heart to Heart engages appropriate officials in discussions about infrastructure rebuilding projects. Our primary focus will always be on helping to rebuild the central healthcare system, but our efforts will not be limited to this part of the overall infrastructure. Other areas that we will consider for assistance include the following: Rebuilding community centers, schools and neighborhoods through volunteer support and targeted procurement; leading educational initiatives; and assisting widows and orphans face a challenging new life. This phase is the longest of the four crisis-related phases and can range in terms of quarters to years to decades.



RESTORATION: As rebuilding projects near completion and a sense of normalcy returns, we begin to see signs of restoration. We work to commemorate the local success of working hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart on important anniversaries as a means for some closure on the crisis. At several points along the Crisis Continuum, Heart to Heart also explores opportunities to begin healthcare development programs in the area to ensure that restoration continues and an even better community emerges in the aftermath of the crisis.