



When Disaster Strikes: What Would You Bring?

Experience the difficult choices and challenges faced by individuals in the communities Mercy Corps supports after a disaster.

In your small group or "family unit," decide which items to take on your journey to safety with limited time and information.



Family profile and situation

You and your extended family have lived your whole life in the same rural village. Your family has been farming and raising livestock for many generations, and your livelihood depends on predictable weather patterns. The land that used to be filled with lush, green fields is now dry and barren. When the rainy season comes, it's unpredictable.

The rain often runs off the hard, dry ground instead of soaking in, leading to flash floods.

In your culture, family and community are very important. Even though money isn't plentiful, your home is filled with love. Despite the economic hardship caused by climate change, you can't imagine living anywhere else. After all, your family has faced hardship before and shown its resilience.



Disaster strikes

A relentless drought has gripped the region, and its effects are severe. Over many months, the river dried up, crops failed, and cattle grew thin. Then, one evening, the wind changed, and thick, dark clouds began to gather on the horizon, growing bigger and blacker by the minute.

At first, the heavy rain was a relief, but the dry ground, parched from years of drought, couldn't absorb the water fast enough. The rain quickly pooled on the surface, turning into rivers that spread across the land. Despite your best efforts to stop the water from entering your home, it floods through the cracks and rises quickly, reaching knee-high, then waist-high, and keeps rising.

It becomes clear to everyone in your family that they need to leave your home immediately to find safety. You only have a few moments to decide what to bring with you. You don't know where you are going or what exactly you will need, but you do know that finding safety for your family is the most important thing.



ACTION

- [Click here to access a collection of item cards](#)
- Timekeeper starts the timer for 90 seconds
- Your family (group) must decide which three items you will bring with you

You wade through the muddy water towards a hill beyond the village, struggling to keep your footing as the current tugs at your legs. By the time you reach the top of the hill, the village is unrecognizable. The fields are now flooded, with most livestock missing. Homes are destroyed, and critical infrastructure like buildings and roads have been wiped away. Your family and other community members make it to the hill and wait for the storm to pass.

After some time, a group of men from another village arrives. They say they will help your family get to safety, but first, you must trade them something valuable.

ACTION

- Set the timer for 30 seconds and
- As a group, decide which item to leave behind

You successfully made it to safer land. After a full day of walking, you make it to a town large enough to provide your family with some basic necessities. But as you explore, you find that the people in this town are not very welcoming. They don't speak your dialect and have different customs. You understand this, as resources were already scarce in both communities, and accepting refugees could further strain those limited resources. It's difficult to find a place to stay that feels safe. You are running low on money and must give up one last item to find safe shelter and get a meal for the night.

ACTION

- Set the timer for 30 seconds
- As a group, decide which final item to leave behind



After days of traveling and eating little food, your children are both sick with a fever and showing signs of emotional stress. The hunger is unbearable, it feels like things can't get any worse.

Luckily, you hear from another family that fled the flooding that there are humanitarian groups offering to help people like you. That evening, you meet someone from Mercy Corps, who gives your family critical items like solar lamps, water filters, blankets, mats, tarps, and hygiene kits.

You are also given a debit card that has \$90 plus \$40 for each additional family member, so you can buy the things you need most. They send you to a health center to treat your children's worsening illness and explain that Mercy Corps' assistance is just one part of the larger effort, with the community working alongside aid organizations to rebuild and recover.

This isn't the end of your journey, and the future remains uncertain, but for now, you are relieved to have a safe place to stay, the resources to meet your family's immediate needs, and the hope for a better tomorrow.

Emergency Response at Mercy Corps

When crises strike, Mercy Corps is committed to delivering rapid assistance driven by the needs of the communities we're serving. Responses often include:



Water



Cash



Food



Sanitation
& Hygiene



Access to
information



Access to
energy

Thank you for participating!

