

When Disaster Strikes: What Would You Bring? Story

Through this interactive activity, you will experience the challenges and choices individuals from the communities Mercy Corps serves are faced with after a disaster strikes. Within your small group “family unit,” decide together which items you would bring on your journey to safety with limited time and information.

Family profile

You and your family have spent your entire lives living in the same rural town. Over the years, the town’s population has grown smaller as more and more people leave for better opportunities. You and your spouse are both employed as day laborers and your children attend the local school. While money isn’t plentiful, the household is filled with love.



Disaster strikes

A devastating 7.9 magnitude earthquake has struck your community. When the ground started shaking, parts of your house, made from stone and clay, started crumbling to the ground. In the aftermath, you were able to quickly confirm that members of your immediate family survived – but not everyone in the neighborhood was so lucky. The experience was traumatizing, but you don’t have much time to process. It’s quickly becoming clear that beyond the destruction of your house, all essential infrastructure that supports the local economy is gone. Your family makes the difficult decision to leave in search of your basic needs and opportunity.

With the threat of aftershocks and the fear of losing access to your house entirely, you only have a few moments to decide what you are going to bring with you. You are uncertain of where you are going or what you will need on the journey, 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 (small group) must decide which three items you will bring with you

With only these three items, you and your family say goodbye to your house and neighborhood, and set-off on foot since the roads are blocked with debris. After walking for hours, you make it to a large river that you must cross. A man at the river says he will help you cross with his boat, but first you must trade him something of value.

ACTION

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

You have successfully crossed the river and after a full day of walking, you make it to a town large enough to provide your family with some basic necessities. As you explore this new town, you find that the residents are not very welcoming. They don't speak the same dialect as you and have different customs. You find it difficult to find a place to stay that feels safe. You are running low on money and must give up a final item in order to find safe shelter and a meal for the night.

ACTION

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

Your daughter and spouse are both feverish and your son is showing signs of emotional trauma and stress from the earthquake experience. You find a bank and try to take money out of your savings account, but the bank was damaged in the quake and can't help. It feels like your situation couldn't get much worse.

Luckily, you hear from another family in a similar situation to yours that there are humanitarian groups providing resources and support to people impacted by the earthquake. Later that evening you meet someone from Mercy Corps distributing critical items your family needs like solar lamps, jerry cans and water filters, blankets, mats, mattresses, and hygiene kits. They also help your spouse and daughter find a health center to treat their illness.

You are given a debit card that has \$90 plus \$40 for each additional family member pre-loaded onto it so you can purchase items that your family needs most. This isn't the end of your journey, and the future remains uncertain, but for now you are comforted by having a safe place to stay, the resources to meet your family's immediate needs, and the hope for a stronger 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