

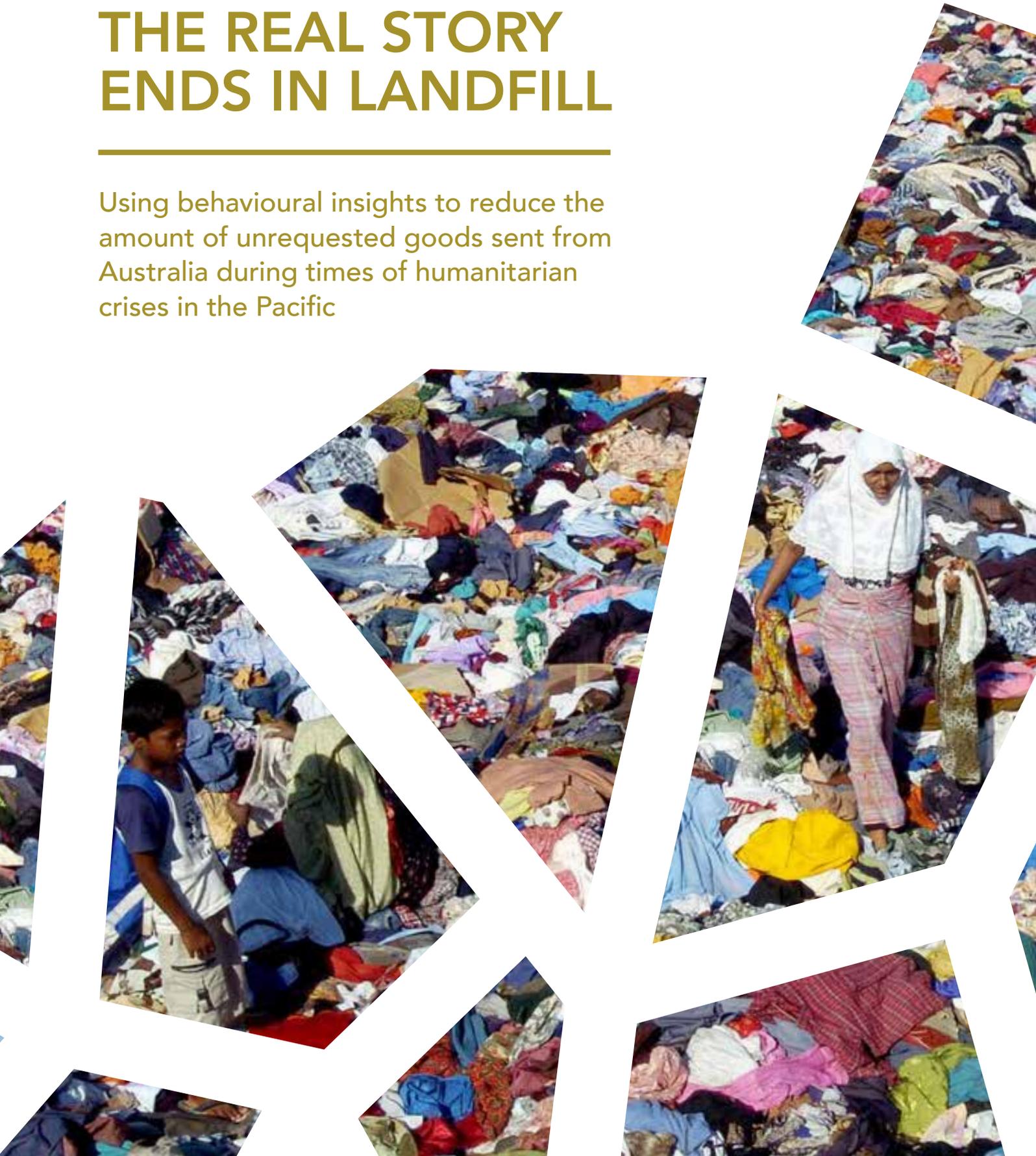


AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
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DEVELOPMENT

THE
BEHAVIOURAL
ARCHITECTS

THE REAL STORY ENDS IN LANDFILL

Using behavioural insights to reduce the amount of unrequested goods sent from Australia during times of humanitarian crises in the Pacific



Acknowledgments

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Kim Sanchez – ChildFund Australia

Tim Watkin – ACFID (Project Coordinator)

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Teddies for Timor

Our heartfelt thanks go to those generous people who have made this possible.

Including, Stack and Stow Storage, Grace Removalists, Pickfords, Allied Couriers, Coastal Transport Services, Chittaway Post Office, Work for the Dole Programme, 2WS, Sydney Morning Herald, Colson Industries, Fay Carter

Credit: Matthew Sleeth courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, 1999

Foreword

In 1999, Australians sent a large number of teddy bears to East Timorese children under the campaign 'Teddies for Timor.' Whilst well-intentioned, the bears took up valuable shipping and warehouse space. Teddy bears were an alien concept to the children, and the stuffing and surface of the bears became unsanitary in the tropical climate of Timor Leste.

Unrequested goods sent to post-disaster zones, or what are often referred to in the international development sector as Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs), are not a new phenomenon. The history of post-disaster zones is littered with examples showing the disruption created by unsuitable, unrequested goods which arrive unannounced, without appropriate paperwork and lack a clear recipient.

This trend has continued. Analysing the response to Tropical Cyclones Pam and Winston in the Pacific in 2015 and 2016 respectively, the Australian Red Cross (ARC) found that UBDs which had arrived from Australia had created considerable costs for local governments and disrupted the humanitarian supply chain. The report identified that in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston, "Fiji received 133 (shipping) containers, plus 8147 pieces of loose cargo (ranging from packages to pallets) totaling: 83,315 m3 of goods, enough to fill over 33 Olympic swimming pools."

The stark conclusions of the ARC report led to powerful recommendations on where to turn to next in tackling the disruptive effect of UBDs. This led directly to the collaborative work between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and ACFID's membership to act on those recommendations.

In June 2017, ACFID – with the support of DFAT and in partnership with its members – began a project to enable the public to support Australia's humanitarian response efforts more effectively, and in doing so, reduce the number of UBDs sent from Australia.

A crucial part of the first stage of the project was to create public-facing messaging to reduce the number of UBDs sent and to test the effectiveness of those messages. This report summarises research undertaken by The Behavioural Architects to understand the motivations and behaviour of members of the public who send UBDs and how those insights were used to create effective messaging.

Existing public messaging to deter UBDs used by ACFID's members, DFAT, and other partners, focused on messaging drawn from USAID's Center for International Disaster Information or (CIDI). The 'Cash-is-Best' message – now used most readily across the Australian international development sector – focuses on the flexibility of cash in buying what's needed and when during humanitarian responses.

While helpful in unifying a set of positive messaging, there was little evidence to assess whether this messaging was effective. Was it convincing? Did it change behaviour? To fulfil the primary aim of the project, it was essential to test our assumptions and determine if the foundations of our public messaging were sound. In doing so, we sought to uncover what the best message would be to reduce the overall number of UBDs sent from Australia.

Drawing on research from psychology, behavioural economics, and neuroscience, The Behavioural Architects sought to understand the behaviour and decision-making that was leading to people in Australia sending UBDs. The research unearthed new insights and delivered an in-depth understanding of the motivations of UBD donors, as well as developing clear results of how to change behaviour.

Their findings – drawn from a rigorous methodology – proposes new foundations for public messaging to effectively reduce the number of UBDs being sent from Australia. The project team will now turn its attention to raising awareness of the findings and translating them into communications products which will cut through to target audiences and can be used by partners and stakeholders alike.



Marc Purcell

Chief Executive Officer
Australian Council for International Development



This foundational piece of research has demonstrated the extraordinary value of understanding both the context of behaviour, as well as the automatic and intuitive nature of human decision-making within it.

In the case of Australian UBD behaviour, this has not only led to a deeper understanding of what motivates UBD behaviour, but also the development of a more effective communications strategy to disrupt donors' misperceptions and ultimately change their behaviour."

**MELISSA GILL, MANAGING PARTNER,
THE BEHAVIOURAL ARCHITECTS**

Executive Summary

Human behaviour is largely dominated by quick, automatic and intuitive decision-making. The research found that members of the Australian community who send unrequested goods to disaster-zones operate in this quick and automatic mode of thinking, piecing together information that supports their beliefs about sending goods.

- Though their intentions are good, they do not stop to consider where their donated goods really end up, nor whether they actually had a positive or a negative impact on the disaster zone. To change behaviour, this automatic mode of thinking needs to be disrupted.
- New reference points which depict the reality of unrequested goods need to be established, because simply saying 'Cash is Best' is not enough to disrupt existing beliefs about goods donation behaviour.
- This research has found that public messaging needs to include new pieces of information which are binary in their nature. This will ensure that they cannot be interpreted in a way that can still support the false positive narrative that unrequested goods both reach and are useful to people affected by crises.
- Of four optimised messages which were quantitatively tested with over 1000 people in Australia, the most resonating and behaviourally effective message was one which emphasised that many of the goods sent to disaster zones ended up in landfill.
- The 'Landfill' communication reduced the likelihood that a participant would send goods by 50.1%. The 'cash only' message – which focused on how cash was flexible and could be transformed into different forms of assistance – achieved only a 23.4% reduction in likelihood to donate goods.
- The message on 'Delays' to unrequested goods reaching their destination achieved the second greatest reduction in likelihood to donate goods with 38.4%, and unrequested goods 'Clogging' supply chains saw a 30.0% reduction in likelihood to donate goods.
- The 'Landfill' communication was proven to be effective because:
 - It provided new information and a new anchor in the decision-making process for the audience;
 - The word 'landfill' and image featured in the concept provided a quick mental shortcut for waste;
 - There was cognitive ease associated with the message, because a mental picture of landfill is very easily brought to mind and can only be a negative association; and
 - It is a definitive 'full stop' to the journey of a donated good, and, therefore, there is no ambiguity or possible rationale that could still provide justification for sending goods.
- Through this research, there is now behavioural insights and strategies to not only understand this behaviour, but to actively work to reduce it.
- While this research provides firm foundations for reducing the likelihood of sending UBDs in the future, it cannot be assumed that it will also automatically increase cash donations. There is a need for complementary research into the behaviour of donating cash to fully understand how to maximize cash donations.

Introduction

UBDs are unrequested goods that are donated to disaster zones during times of humanitarian crisis. Donors who send UBDs do so with the best of intentions, believing that the goods they are sending will provide relief to those affected by the humanitarian crisis. UBDs are costly; create logistical problems; often are inappropriate to recipient communities; and can negatively impact transport hubs, staff and volunteer time, and the economic state of the disaster-affected nation

For example, 10 months after Tropical Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015, the Australian Red Cross reported that there were still 18 shipping containers full of UBDs left on the wharf in Port Vila. These containers had reportedly accumulated approximately USD\$1.5million dollars in storage, handling and container rental fees – costs borne by the Government of Vanuatu.

‘Unsolicited Bilateral Donations’ may be an unfamiliar term to many, however 12.1% of Australians over 16 say they would be *very likely or extremely likely* to donate or send goods if a Pacific Island Country (i.e. Fiji, Vanuatu) had a humanitarian disaster. This is equivalent to more than 3 million Australians and represents major financial and logistical issues for future humanitarian crisis zones.

To better understand the motivations and behaviour of those who send these unrequested donations in the aftermath of a disaster, ACFID, with the support of DFAT, commissioned The Behavioural Architects to conduct a behavioural research project. Insights surfaced from this research, together with insights from Behavioural Science, informed a strategic and messaging recommendation on how to reduce the amount of UBDs being sent during times of humanitarian disaster.



“The behaviour of sending a UBD is largely governed by a System 1 mode of thinking, people do not stop to explore possibilities of how the good will get to the destination, how much money will be required to do this, who will unpack it or where it will eventually end up.”

PROJECT HYPOTHESIS – THE BEHAVIOURAL ARCHITECTS

The Behavioural Research Approach

The Behavioural Architects is a global research, insights and strategy development agency who specialise in using insights from Behavioural Science, in particular Behavioural Economics, to gain a deeper understanding of behaviour and how to influence it.

Prior to the primary research into understanding the behaviour of those who send UBDs, a number of behavioural hypotheses were developed using principles from Behavioural Economics. Key stakeholders from ACFID, DFAT, as well as a number of ACFID's members were involved in developing hypotheses as to why people send UBDs. This was also supported by a research project in which 34 of ACFID's members were surveyed about why donors familiar to them sent goods. These behavioural hypotheses helped to shape both the research design and specific areas for exploration.

The Behavioural Architects designed a multi-layered research approach, including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A key component of the research design was a focus on the context in which the behaviour occurs. A foundational insight from behavioural science is that much of our behaviour is subconscious and is influenced by the context around it, therefore an approach was designed that allowed for contextual observations over time.

Prior to this project there was little information available on the profile of those who send UBDs. Therefore, the research sample specifications were based on hypotheses from key stakeholders in the aid sector. The sample was constructed to reflect a number of segments; holiday-makers, businesses, community groups, religious groups and expatriates.

The multi-layered research approach included the following components:

BEHAVIOURAL JOURNEY CONTEXTUAL DEPTH INTERVIEWS, NOVEMBER 2017 – JANUARY 2018 (N=7):

- 60-minute contextual depth interviews with previous donors of UBDs.
- These were a mix of friends or 'triads' of individuals (a group that share the similar views or interests) in Brisbane and Sydney. These in-context interviews captured contextual insight as well as exploration of the memories of recent experiences of donating goods to a humanitarian crisis.

BEHAVIOURAL SELF-ETHNOGRAPHIC 'SAFARIS', DECEMBER 2017 (N=15):

- A longitudinal (7 day), online self-ethnographic study of the behaviour of donating goods.
- Each day activities were created to explore UBD behaviour and observe decision-making in context. The study also included qualitative testing of messages around reducing UBDs.

BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS INSPIRED MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT, JANUARY 2018:

- Using insights from the research and Behavioural Economics, The Behavioural Architects developed four UBD message territories to be taken into quantitative testing.

QUANTITATIVE MESSAGE TESTING, FEBRUARY 2018: (N=1024)

- The quantitative testing measured changes in participants' likelihood to donate goods before and after seeing the different pieces of communication. This testing provided an indication of the likely impact that each of the different message interventions would have on changing UBD behaviour.
- To get the most realistic view of likely behavioural outcome the sample included only people that had donated goods in the past or people who confirmed they would consider donating in the future.

Behavioural Insights about UBDs

The qualitative research revealed a series of **behavioural insights** that helped to understand the behavioural journey of those who send UBDs, the motivations to send goods and the barriers for donating cash instead.

DECISION-MAKING AROUND UBDs IS GOVERNED BY A SYSTEM 1 MODE OF THINKING

Fundamental to understanding the UBD behavioural journey was a behavioural insight centered around the Behavioural Economics principle of System 1 and 2 thinking. This principle refers to the fact that humans have two modes of cognitively processing information, System 1 – which is automatic, fast, intuitive, emotional, reacts to cues and looks for patterns, and then in contrast, System 2, which is much more conscious, effortful, logical, deliberate and explores possibilities and probabilities. Behavioural Science has shown that for the most part, lives are led in a System 1 mode of thinking, conserving our limited resource of System 2 for select tasks.

An initial hypothesis was that decisions to donate UBDs were dominated by a System 1 mode of thinking, the hypothesis was... *“The behaviour of sending a UBD is largely governed by a System 1 mode of thinking, people do not stop to explore possibilities of how the good will get to the destination, how much money will be required to do this, who will unpack it or where it will eventually end up”.*

The research unequivocally proved this hypothesis. Donors of UBDs operate in this very quick and automatic mode of thinking, they do not stop to explore the possibility that their goods did not have a positive impact in the disaster

zone. When participants were prompted to reflect on where the goods they sent ended up, all they reported on was their goods arriving safely and having a positive impact.

As exemplified by one participant of the study:

“Of course the items made it to their destination and were given to people who most needed it, (clothing and toys for children most affected etc) though I can’t confirm if that’s 100% true”

MALE, SYDNEY COMMUNITY

Closely linked to the System 1 mode of thinking is a particular rule in Behavioural Economics called WYSIATI – What-You-See-Is-All-There-Is. This term is used to explain how our System 1 mode of thinking creates coherent stories from imperfect information to help us make decisions.

Without perfect information to inform their decision about what to donate, donors subconsciously fill in the blanks. They jump to the conclusion that their goods will end up in the right place and have a positive impact. The image below was drawn by a participant to summarise his donation journey, it is an incredibly clear depiction of the System 1 error in thinking that occurs.





THE TANGIBLE NATURE OF GOODS MAKES IT EASIER FOR SYSTEM 1 THINKING TO CONFIRM THE GOOD IT WILL DO

Donors of goods anchor to salient media imagery of the devastation in the disaster zone and subsequently assume that everything has been destroyed, that people have lost everything. In such a scenario, it is easy to see how a physical item would be very beneficial to those affected. It is easy to see how a jumper would help keep someone warm, a tarpaulin to keep people dry, or food would provide nourishment for people in need.

"We donated clothes ranging from kids to adult sizes for different seasons because people who have lost things always need clothing"
HOLIDAYMAKER, FEMALE, SYDNEY

CASH IS FRAMED AS BEING MORE CORRUPTIBLE THAN GOODS

The fact that cash can be transformed into anything is an obvious trigger for most, but for donors of goods it raises a significant barrier - that it could be used improperly by agencies and governments.

"I've travelled a lot to the Pacific Islands... and I found there is quite a lot of corruption at local government level. And also, when you donate cash to charities a lot of the agencies take commission so I'd much rather donate clothing. That way I know it's gone to the people that need it"
COMMUNITY, MALE, MELBOURNE

GOODS ARE FRAMED AS LESS CORRUPTIBLE THAN CASH DONATIONS

The tangible quality of goods leads donors to frame their goods donation as less corruptible. For example, when compared with cash which could be used for multiple things, items like a table, or clothes, will only ever be a table and clothes when they reach their destination.

"Feel more satisfaction that the items will be used in a good way - as compared to money, items bring the satisfaction that your donation will actually be making an impact knowing there's little else the items could go to."
COMMUNITY, MALE, SYDNEY

AVAILABILITY OF 'JUST WHAT IS NEEDED' MAKES IT EASY TO ACT ON THE DECISION TO DONATE GOODS

Supporting the decision to donate goods, is the ease with which it is possible to collect and send everyday things that are available in the immediate context. Donors also anchored to a sense of excess – of having too many things and needing to recycle and make use of their unwanted items. This helps to further encourage the behaviour because the act of collecting and sorting is framed as 'recycling' or 'putting to use' things that might be otherwise thrown out.

"Easy part - finding stuff I didn't need!"
COMMUNITY, FEMALE, SYDNEY

The ease that donors experience when collecting and donating goods is further amplified if there is someone else willing to organise the shipping and distribution of the goods.

"It's an easy thing to do, especially when someone else gets the ball rolling"
BUSINESS, FEMALE, BRISBANE

SOCIAL COMMITMENTS REINFORCE GOODS DONATION BEHAVIOURS

Organising the collection and donation of goods is a more social and visible act than simply donating cash. Goods donors often reported making public commitments to their social circles about donating goods.

Behavioural Science identifies a cognitive bias called Commitment Bias, where by verbal or written commitments make the stated behaviour much more likely to occur. If a donor commits socially to collecting and donating goods, it is hard for them to contradict this by not following through with their stated behaviour.

"I got in touch with local Red Cross through some friends and organised through the local sporting club. We sent out newsletter via email to the club members and over a week we received many donations of clothing and blankets"

HOLIDAYMAKER,
MALE, MELBOURNE

A SOCIAL COMMITMENT ADDS TO THE 'SUNK-COSTS' INVOLVED IN DONATING GOODS

The research showed that there is a great deal of time and resource invested in the effort of gathering and coordinating the shipment of goods donations to a disaster zone.

The Sunk Cost Fallacy is a cognitive bias that explains how people are emotionally biased by our past investments. Rather than weighing up future costs and benefits people are very influenced by their prior investment in something, making it harder to cut our losses and abandon the behaviour.

A social commitment to contribute items for a donation adds to the sunk-costs that a donor has already invested into this behaviour.

"We have had a pensioner aged-woman travel all the way from Randwick with two huge sacks of clothes to donate"

RELIGIOUS, MALE, SYDNEY

DONORS ACTIVELY SEEK INFORMATION THAT SUPPORTS THEIR DECISION TO DONATE GOODS

Confirmation Bias explains the human tendency to seek out information that supports existing beliefs, as opposed to information that challenges their beliefs. This was very evident in donor behaviour, they seek information that supports their beliefs about the right things to donate and ignore information that contradicts these beliefs.

Confirmation Bias can also lead people to misinterpret information. The research revealed an issue of donors misunderstanding cash donation messages, for example when humanitarian agencies communicate a cash fundraising message to appeal for money to buy items such as medicine

or tarpaulins, donors can misinterpret this as a request for these items rather than the cash.

"When the disaster was announced all the usual agencies - Red Cross etc. put out requests for cash donations but it was difficult to find agencies that would take clothing. Required some internet searching."

HOLIDAYMAKER,
MALE, MELBOURNE

DONORS ARE DOUBTFUL THAT CASH WILL ACTUALLY GET TO THE DISASTER ZONE

Goods donors frame cash as less immediate than goods, they just don't believe that it will make it to the intended beneficiaries after the disaster.

"I just didn't want to donate cash because sometimes I'm just not sure that it's actually going to get there to the right people. And potentially the delays – you know it'll take time for someone to go and use the cash to buy and get it over to them."

HOLIDAYMAKER, MALE, SYDNEY

GOODS ARE FRAMED AS IMMEDIATE – PEOPLE IMAGINE THERE IS NOTHING LEFT IN THE DISASTER ZONE, THEREFORE GOODS CAN BE USED IMMEDIATELY

From the perspective of those who donate goods, there are few obstacles that stand in the way of their goods donations reaching a beneficiary and having a positive impact. Donations do not have to be converted or exchanged for anything before they can be used by a beneficiary – they can be put to immediate use in the original way intended for the item.

"...the goods can offer immediate use..."

RELIGIOUS, FEMALE, MELBOURNE

SALIENT MEDIA STORIES ABOUT NGO MISSPENDING CREATES NEGATIVE ANCHOR POINTS

All of the donors in the study could recall media stories that gave salience to the improper use of donations by humanitarian agencies.

This salient information becomes an anchor point from which donors of goods refer to when making a decision between donating goods or cash.

"I just am a bit wary of some charities potentially not forwarding donations on, I've heard stories in the news media about only 20 cents for every dollar going to the people it's intended for and the rest pays wages or buys bibles or something"

HOLIDAYMAKER, MALE, SYDNEY

A LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND FEEDBACK ABOUT CASH DONATIONS IS A TRIGGER FOR GOODS DONATIONS

Donors noted frequently throughout the study that they felt there was little record of what cash donations were spent on, with many questioning where the money actually ends up.

Feedback is an important part of reinforcing any behaviour, if people understand that a certain behaviour produces a positive result when

performed, their inclination to carry out that behaviour is dramatically influenced.

"Is it going to the needy? Where is the money going? Will the donor know?"

COMMUNITY, FEMALE, SYDNEY

DONATING CASH IS PERCEIVED AS LESS CONNECTED AND PERSONAL THAN DONATING GOODS

Donors of goods generally framed the person who donates items as much more thoughtful, caring and as having taken more time to understand what might be needed in times of disaster.

Conversely, donors of cash were framed as less connected to the cause than goods donors.

[About a person who donates goods]

"These people put in more thought about what is needed and are more likely regularly involved in charity work" (than someone who donates cash)

HOLIDAYMAKER, FEMALE, SYDNEY

Decision-making process needs to be disrupted to change behaviour

The research provided strong evidence to suggest that changing behaviour would be heavily reliant on the ability to disrupt the incorrect System 1 narrative that donors create about where donated goods end up.

Donors anchor to their goods donations being practical, immediate, incorruptible, always reaching the intended beneficiary, and generally a better form of donation, compared to cash.

Through the qualitative exploration of a range of messages, it was clear that for a UBD reduction message to be behaviourally effective, it would require more than simply giving salience to the ideal, desired behaviour. It required a step further than simply saying 'cash is best'.

Simply saying 'cash is best' is not enough because it does not change beliefs or behaviours about donating goods. To get to the outcome of 'cash is best' you first need to give salience to why it is best – not in its own right – but because the alternative (donating goods) is deficient.

The most effective messages from the qualitative stage of research were those that presented new, disruptive anchor points. For example, messages that gave salience to the problems caused by goods, such as waste, clogging distribution channels and causing delays.

Developing UBD messaging for quantitative testing

The behavioural insights surfaced in the qualitative phase of research were used to develop the ideal communication strategy and four optimised messages to take into quantitative testing.

Only Cash

In times of disaster, **ONLY** cash will rapidly transform into what people need most.



CLEAN DRINKING WATER



EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES



CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES

Clogging

In times of disaster, donated goods clog supply chains blocking essential supplies getting through.



CLOGGED SHIPPING PORT



DIRECT



Sending cash goes straight to the disaster zone and doesn't clog supply chains.

Delays

In times of disaster, sending goods takes anywhere between 2–4 months to arrive in the disaster zone.



MONTHS



HOURS OR DAYS



Landfill

Most people donate cash because it is fast, flexible and meets immediate needs.



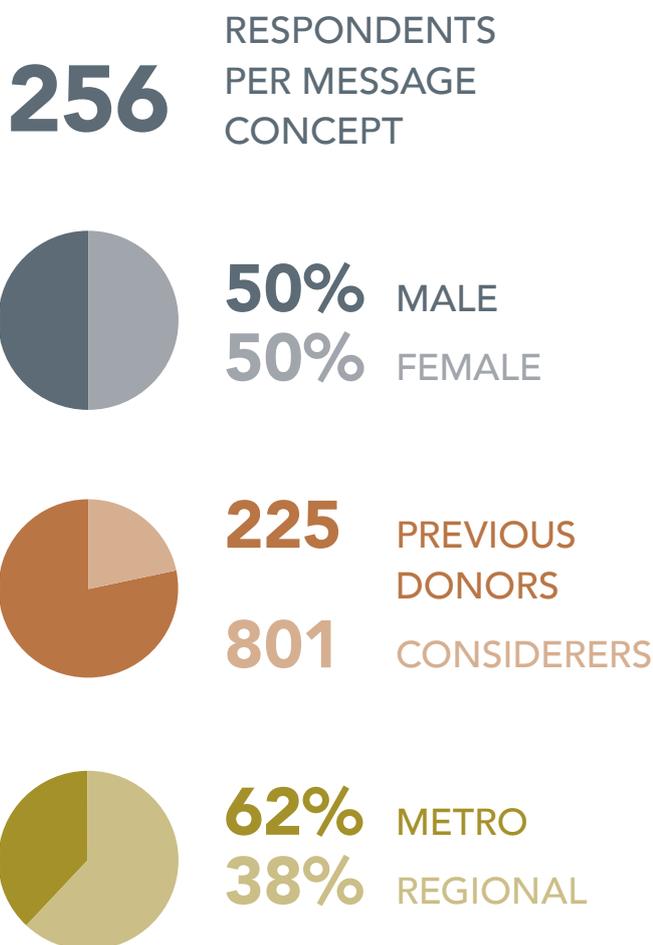
FACT Many donated goods sent to a disaster zone end up in landfill because efforts on the ground are focused on lifesaving aid not unpacking goods donations.



FACT Cash donated during humanitarian disaster never ends up in landfill and helps deliver immediate lifesaving aid.

Quantitative Research Methodology and Sample

The four message concepts were tested online with a nationally representative audience of 1026 people. The audience was made up of: those who would consider donating goods to a disaster in the Pacific Islands in the future and those who have previously donated goods to a disaster in the Pacific Islands.



It is important to note that all respondents only ever saw one message concept, which means respondent answers are not affected by either order effect or by anchoring to things they may have seen if they were exposed to other messages. This resulted in 256 people seeing each communication concept.

The data was collected between: w/c 12th Feb to w/c 16th Feb. This was in a particularly challenging period for aid and international development non-government organisations as the data was collected during the week in which news broke of allegations of sexual misconduct in Haiti by international aid workers.

The research methodology was designed to observe the level of disruption to donors' behaviour. Respondents' likelihood to send or donate goods overseas to a Pacific Island Country post-disaster was captured before and after seeing a particular piece of communication.

Observing the difference in likelihood before and after exposure to stimulus provided a measure of the level of disruption that each message had caused.

Quantitative Findings

The 'landfill' message was the most effective at providing a new anchor point for decision making.

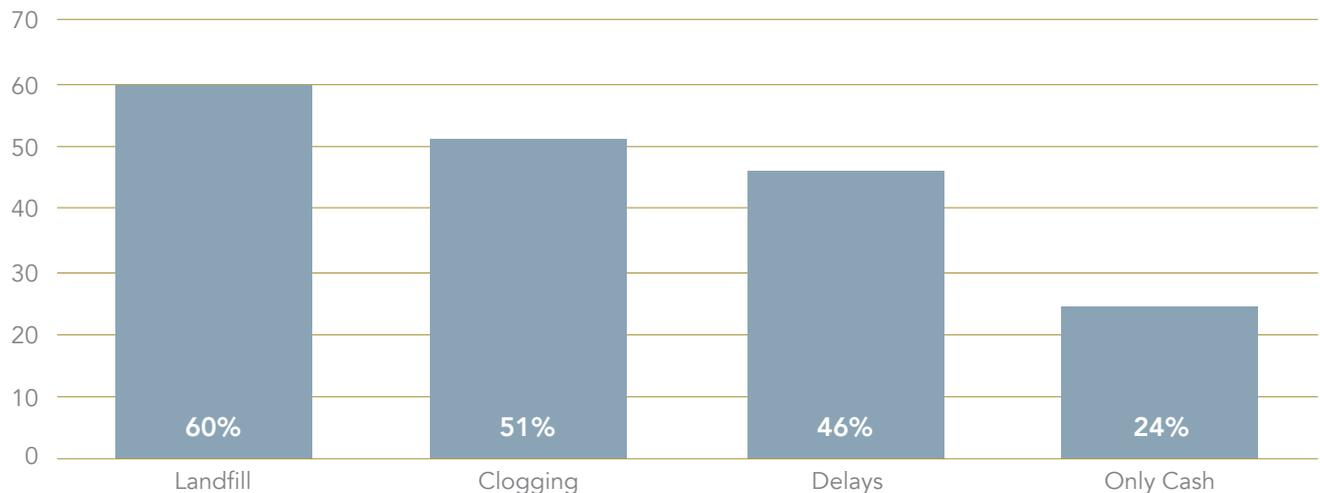
60% of people felt this communication told them something new, compared to 51% for 'Clogging', 46% for 'Delays', and 24% for 'Only cash'.

Most importantly however, is the change in likelihood to donate goods after having seen each communication.

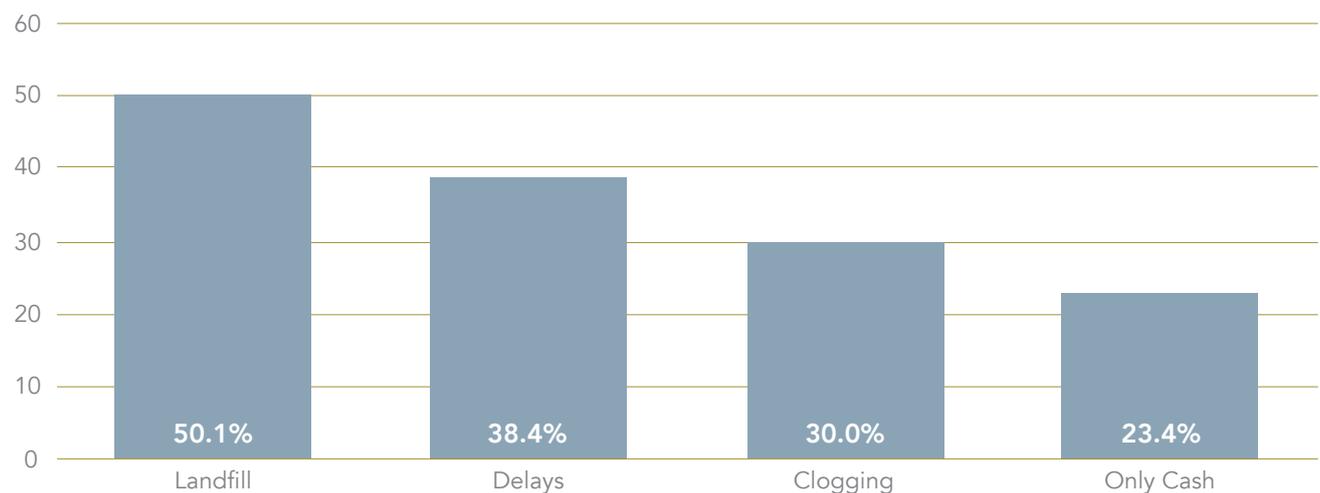
Giving salience to 'landfill' was more than twice as effective as cash in decreasing the likelihood that respondents would donate goods. The 'Landfill' communication reduced the likelihood to donate goods by 50.1%.

The 'cash only' message achieved only a 23.4% reduction in likelihood to donate goods. 'Delays' achieved the second greatest reduction in likelihood to donate goods with 38.4%, and 'Clogging' saw a 30.0% reduction in likelihood to donate goods.

TOLD ME SOMETHING NEW



LIKELIHOOD OF REDUCING SENDING OF GOODS



Why the landfill message is so effective

'Landfill' is a definitive 'full stop' to the journey of a donated good, and therefore, there is no ambiguity or possible rationale that could still provide justification for sending goods.

The word 'landfill' and image featured in the concept provides a quick System 1 shortcut, or heuristic for 'waste'. There is cognitive ease associated with the message, a mental picture of landfill is very easily brought to mind and can only be a negative association.

In contrast, the messages about delays, clogging and cash are more ambiguous and invite System 2 thinking and evaluation. With all three of these messages, likely donors found ways to justify why a delay might be a good thing, how clogging could be avoided or why cash is incorrectly anchored to the misappropriated spending of NGOs.

An important note on the behaviour of donating cash

It is important to distinguish between the two behaviours of sending a UBD and sending cash. It cannot be assumed that if the 'landfill' message is effective in reducing UBD behaviour that it will also automatically increase cash donations.

In fact, the quantitative research showed that despite the 'landfill' message reducing intention to send goods to single digits, there was still 40% of people who stated that they would not give cash.

This study has touched upon some of the barriers to giving cash however there is a need for further research into the behaviour of donating cash to fully understand how to maximise cash donations.

Conclusions

This research has provided a comprehensive understanding of the behaviour associated with sending UBDs and how best to reduce the likelihood of it occurring in the future. A key insight is understanding that goods donors operate in an automatic and intuitive System 1 mode of thinking. They piece together information that supports their beliefs about sending goods, without stopping to explore the facts about where their donated goods really end up. There are a number of cognitive biases that are activated in their construction of a coherent story around the positive impact of goods donated to humanitarian crisis zones.

To change behaviour, the System 1 mode of thinking needs to be disrupted. New anchors or reference points for the reality of UBDs need to be established, as simply saying 'cash is best' is not enough to disrupt goods donation behaviour. Of particular importance is the need for new pieces of information to be binary in their nature i.e. to ensure they cannot be interpreted in a way that can still support the false positive narrative of a UBD.

The quantitative testing phase of this project provided statistical evidence to show that the message about UBDs ending up in landfill, is the most effective (-50%) at reducing the likelihood of sending UBDs in the future. It is important to note that reducing UBDs is not directly correlated with increasing cash donations, further research is required to understand the barriers to donating cash.

Prior to this research there was little known about the people who send UBDs, there is now behavioural insights and strategies to not only understand this behaviour but to actively work to reduce it.



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Cover Image: ACEH JAYA, INDONESIA: Survivors of the tsunami disaster select used clothings in Calang, Aceh Jaya, 01 February 2005.

Credit: Adek Berr

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