



DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

THE CHALLENGES

In the wake of a hurricane, earthquake, tsunami or humanitarian crisis, people are left reeling, devastated by the loss of their family, friends and homes. In the immediate aftermath, they struggle to find the food, water and shelter they need to survive. Emergencies like these are on the rise.

In 2024, approximately 315 million people needed humanitarian assistance. This number shattered previous records, and demonstrated the extent to which the climate crisis and other complex political and humanitarian crises are all converging to create an unprecedented global scale of need. The number of storms and floods around the world, for example, both increased more than 20% since the last decade. The climate crisis, if unchecked, could push more than 130 million people into poverty over the next 10 years.

What's more, these crises result in disasters that disproportionately affect communities in the Global South. While the climate crisis, food insecurity, inflation and conflict have a dire effect on all people, marginalized populations—including women and girls, Indigenous people, ethnic and religious minorities, rural populations, people employed in the informal economy (including sex workers), refugees and internally displaced people and LGBTQI+ communities—are disproportionately impacted. Governments have also used these crises as an excuse to violate the rights and disregard the needs of these groups, deepening inequity and injustice.

Since 1985, AJWS has responded to **over 50** humanitarian crises and natural disasters with more than **\$42 MILLION** in emergency grants and support for communities to rebuild and recover.



When a catastrophic earthquake struck Haiti in 2021, AJWS grantee MOSCTHA organized a mobile health clinic to treat survivors. MOSCTHA was also instrumental in responding to the 2010 quake that hit Port-au-Prince. *Photo courtesy of MOSCTHA.*

HOW WE MAKE CHANGE

AJWS responds rapidly after disasters by mobilizing financial support from our donors and sending aid directly to our partners on the ground. We listen to local organizations and activists who know their communities best, ensuring that the right kinds of help will quickly reach those who need it most.

We fill critical gaps in aid by prioritizing survivors from marginalized communities, recognizing that disasters exacerbate existing inequalities and further compound issues such as poverty and food insecurity. AJWS also responds to smaller disasters that don't make the U.S. news or elicit international aid responses. These floods, mudslides and typhoons are devastating—and the aid we provide is often the only support survivors receive.

AJWS helps build resilience for the future. Because our partners and their communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, we invest in projects that prepare for and mitigate the effects of climate disasters. And we stay the course—supporting long-term efforts to create lasting change as communities recover, build more equitable societies and grow more resilient against future threats.

CRISIS RESPONSE IN ACTION AROUND THE WORLD

AJWS RESPONDS TO THE BURMA-THAILAND EARTHQUAKE

On March 28, 2025, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck near Mandalay, **Burma**, its effects reverberating hundreds of miles away in Bangkok, Thailand. With a death toll of more than 5,000 people, the earthquake became the second deadliest in modern Burmese history, further destabilizing a region deeply unsettled by civil war and the withdrawal of U.S. foreign assistance. Our grantee-partners rushed to provide emergency medical care and relief items such as food, water and shelter—services procured without the assistance of the military junta. AJWS launched an emergency appeal, raising much-needed funds for those affected by the catastrophe.

AN ECONOMIC CRISIS GRIPS SRI LANKA

AJWS has been working in **Sri Lanka** since 2009, in the wake of the civil war that claimed the lives of tens of thousands and decimated the Tamil ethnic group in what has been called a genocide. In 2023, AJWS aided vulnerable communities during the economic crisis that has rocked the country. We're supporting a network of more than a dozen grantee-partners (including **Mannar Social and Economical Development Organization**, pictured below) to coordinate humanitarian aid and livelihood support for families who need it most—including women-led households, families that survived the war, and those living in poverty.



In coastal Sri Lanka, fisherwomen harvest sea cucumbers—a sought-after delicacy in parts of Asia—to earn a living. Their equipment was provided by Mannar Social and Economical Development Organization (MSEDO), an AJWS grantee that is empowering communities to build resilience by supporting sustainable livelihoods. *Photo by Shamila Rathnasooriya.*

EARTHQUAKE AND DEMOCRATIC CRISIS IN HAITI

In August 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck **Haiti**. This was the second massive quake in just over a decade, and came right on the heels of the collapse of Haiti's government and the assassination of its former president. An earthquake of this magnitude would have caused terrible damage to any nation, but in a country with a limited government to respond, it was nothing short of catastrophic. In this void of leadership, AJWS grantees and other local organizations have been a vital lifeline to communities. They launched critical relief campaigns to aid families near the epicenter, all while continuing to lead crucial work to resuscitate Haiti's democracy and pull the country out of this current crisis.

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