

BASIC GUIDELINES AND QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE SENDING UNSOLICITED IN-KIND DONATIONS

First, imagine this...

You are injured and must stay home, which means you can't work anymore, and you don't have any income. Each day you need food, water, and a vital expensive drug. You are able to store a week's supply of food and water, but you can't store your medicine for more than one day. You have 10 good friends who want to support you, what is the best way they could help you?

- They randomly buy whatever they think you need, or what they think others will not get, and send you as much as they can...
- They ask you what you need but each friend goes separately to buy something off the list. They then separately send you as much as they can...
- They ask you what you need, and decide to buy everything together. One friend takes control of collecting everything and regularly ships a parcel to you.
- They ask you what you need, and decide to buy everything that you will need for a week. They send it to you and also send you money so you can choose to buy what you need...

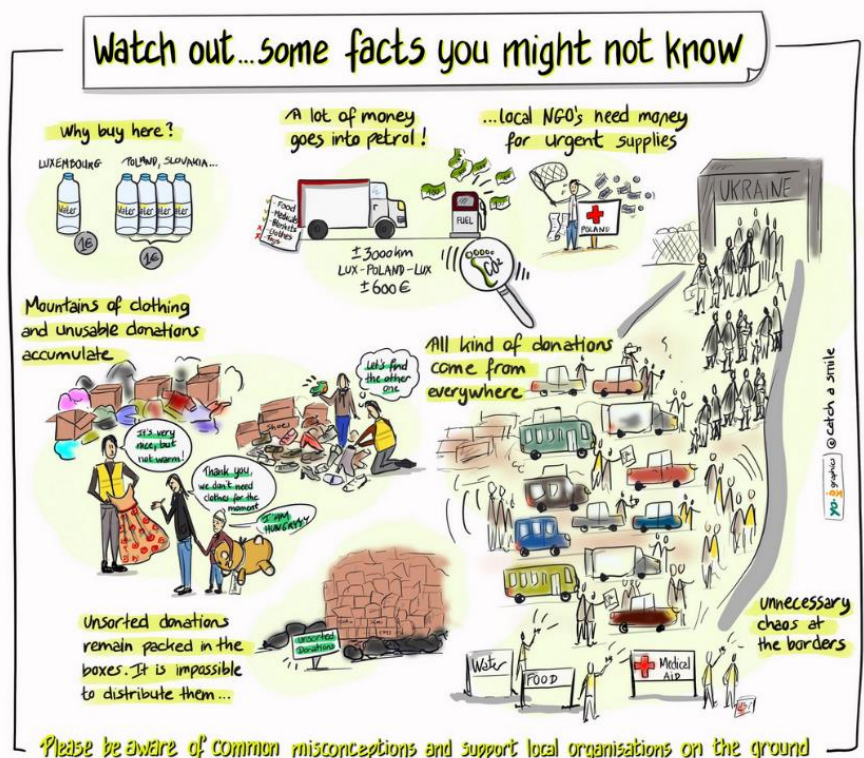
In a real crisis all these scenarios coexist. It is easy to see which ones are more efficient, better for your needs, your dignity, and which ones might do more harm than good. However, in each scenario, your friends have helped...

In large emergencies like the Ukraine crisis, relief items and money are provided by donors and aid organisations to meet many of the needs of people affected.

Some unsolicited donated goods may also be sent privately by community groups or individuals. Such items often are not specifically requested. **The problem is that such donations may:**

- Arrive unannounced or at very short notice
- Have no paperwork or have incorrect shipping documents
- Not have a clearly defined consignee (name and address)
- Not comply with emergency item standards
- Not be packed correctly

The wrong donation at the wrong time can disrupt response efforts by congesting ports, airports, and entry points, and may compete with priority relief items for transport and storage.



GUIDELINES FOR SENDING IN KIND DONATIONS



For aid to be of benefit, donations should only be sent in coordination with national authorities, locally registered charities and/or the humanitarian community. **Once approved, documents must clearly state:**

- **Ownership:** who is the consignee?
- **Feedback:** any feedback, accountability and/or reporting requirements of the donor
- **Costs:** who will cover associated costs for storage, customs clearance, distribution?

For food, medicine, and clothes, consider:

	Unsuitable	Don't send
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expired items or limited expiry date • Poor description of package contents or in unrecognised language • Items requiring controlled storage temperature • Unpacked items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy products • Bread products • Chocolate • Milk substitutes, infant formula in countries where clean water supply is an issue
Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damaged items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High value and controlled drug types • Mixed products
Used Clothes	Creates challenges in sorting and risks contamination of usable items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally inappropriate clothing • Women's shoes with high heels • Not appropriate to local climate

The above guidelines are a simplified summary of the General Guidelines for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs) as posted on the [Logistic Cluster website](#)

To sum-up, an in-kind donation can be sent if:

- The consignee is identified, is willing and able to accept the goods and cover associated costs).
- The goods are responding to a confirmed need, in terms of quality, quantity and timing.
- The goods are not available locally.

Otherwise, consider:

- Sending cash to organisations already on the field.
- If goods are already collected, they could be used in your current location/region (for foodbanks, charities, welcome package) to support refugees.

“Donated goods are needed where the local market cannot supply them. However, it is necessary to deliver exactly what is needed. There should be a balance between donated goods, local procurement and cash support. In Ukraine right now, there is a shortage of certain medical items, but these are not owned by the public and have to be ordered from specialist suppliers.

Monetary donations remain the most efficient way to help. Anyone who prefers to donate things could consider selling them locally. All proceeds can then be donated to organisations helping refugees.”

<https://theconversation.com/ukraine-crisis-why-you-should-donate-money-rather-than-supplies-178245>

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