



**Analysis of opinions and experiences of
Australians involved in disaster response
overseas to enhance effectiveness of
humanitarian assistance**

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■ Question

- **Is humanitarian work a career or calling or a combination of both?**



Outline:

- **Background in research**
- **Overview of research**
- **Preliminary findings**
- **Discussion on the question**

■ The project: background

- An increase in regional disasters and complex emergencies which are of particular interest to Australia (eg. tsunami; Timor Leste; Bali bombings; Solomon Islands and regional earthquakes)
- great public support for humanitarian interventions (eg. tsunami appeals)
- The Australian humanitarian response has been diverse in structure; objectives; and staffing
- Foreign policy tool
- AusAID funding research on humanitarian effectiveness

■ Our Research

- **How can we use the individual and organisational experiences of Australians in disasters and humanitarian emergencies to improve the effectiveness of the Australian health sector humanitarian response in the future?**
 - Skills and trainings
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Lessons learnt

The Project: methodology

- **80 interviews**
 - **Selection Criteria:**
 - Australian or permanent resident
 - Involved in response to an international disaster in the past 5 years
 - **2 discussion groups**
of over 100 people involved in disaster training/education
- **Interviews**
 - Phone or face-to-face
 - Purposive sampling using databases
 - Personal contacts
 - Snowballing

■ The project: background

We questioned the following issues:

- 1. Recruitment and retention of staff**
- 2. Motivations (personal and institutional)**
- 3. Predeparture preparation**
- 4. Field experiences**
- 5. Post-field experiences**
- 6. Skills sets**
- 7. Perceptions of aid effectiveness**
- 8. Cross-cutting issues (gender, security, ethics, religion, culture)**

■ Informants

Australian responders has been of four types:

1. **NGOs: individuals joining NGOs based on personal motivations;**
2. **Government-based response teams (eg. surgical teams sent to Aceh; medical teams to Bali bombings; and public health to natural disasters);**
3. **“Military”:** (eg. Timor Leste; Afghanistan; Iraq; Solomons)
4. **Volunteer surgical teams (RCS ATLASS programme) to complex emergencies or protracted conflict such as TL and Solomon Islands).**

■ Finding (preliminary)

- **Motivation**
- **Preparation**
- **Personal investment verses longevity**
- **Field work-expectations verses realities**
- **Returning home**
 - Individual needs and stressors
 - Organisational requirements
 - Employment
 - Reflections on effectiveness
- **Retention- self motivated**

■ Question:

- **Career calling?**



■ Thank you

Contact

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