



IDEAS FOR BICYCLE RELIEF EFFORTS FOR BEIRUT

Prepared by Mexico City's Bicycle Mayor team
August 6th, 2020.

With warm hugs and prayers for everyone in Beirut.

The following are ideas based on bicycle response efforts during Mexico's 2017 earthquakes.

- Act quickly. Make decisions and act fast. It is better to begin to take action and improve the service on the go, than to lose time in a long preparation.
- Assess the needs as soon as possible. Only do what is not being done by the government or another civil group. Sometimes it is best to help an ongoing effort than to create your own. If your help is not needed at a particular site or effort, you may become an obstacle, at a time when your help is most likely needed someplace else..
- Exercise empathy: think of what would be your need if you were someone affected by the explosion. Listen to testimonies as they can give you ideas of where or how you can help.
- Make sure you are in coordination with other civil society groups in order to avoid duplicated efforts. One way to organize and make help more efficient is to determine different types of volunteers. For example: On-site, data, goods collection and temporary shelters. Bicycle volunteers can work as links between the other 4 types of volunteers, and support them in transport and communication efforts.

- Be COVID safe. Prioritize your own team's security. In order for people to be able to help, they must be safe. This is paramount.

- If you need to prioritize actions, choose to do what empowers other people: let them feel the power and the resilience of the bicycle and their own strength. It doesn't matter if your group is only made up by just a few people at the beginning; if you begin by doing something that is kind and useful, others will follow the lead and help.

- Always put people's wellbeing first. Be sure to help equally everyone in need without making distinctions upon race, age, gender, class or any other consideration. Adopt a "first come, first served" policy to ensure equity.

- Be sure to document your effort and post it publicly in order for other people and organizations to join.

-Bikes can be of use to search for people where other service vehicles can't operate because of weight or ignition (where gas leakages or other hazards are in place). Bicycles that are able to carry heavy loads can help bring aid to the people in need, like transport, tools, food, medicines, etc...

-Bikes can also be used to mobilize people to bring helping hands to where they are most needed. It may be best to leave ground zero and the most dangerous areas to the teams that are most equipped and trained teams and focus the attention on the shattered homes by the expansive wave. Being there to help clean up with all the COVID measures, gloves, sweeping brooms, etc. could be of a lot of help, especially for single mothers, elderly people or people with some kind of disability. Define a zone of unloading of debris and ask the government help to pick it up.

-You can help set a place where people can drop off donations or set up a bicycle service to pick up donations at home, so people don't have to go out and risk COVID contagion. Create an account on Twitter and/or Facebook or use your own networks to ask for help. Be sure to let people know how to participate with clear instructions that are easy to understand and follow. Less is best, always.

-If possible, set up a bank account so that people can make cash donations so you are able to buy food, medicines or repair equipment or materials to bring to families in need. Be sure to take pictures, testimonies or other proof of the delivery of goods,

as well as to keep receipts of everything purchased and delivered to be able to provide evidence of good and honest management.

-We followed these ethical principles (in Spanish) to create a civic movement rather than a personal individual effort: <https://verificado19s.org/sobre-v19s/#principios>

-Please review this Guide to establish a relief donation center with COVID safe measures:

<http://nosotrxs.org/wp-content/uploads/Gu%C3%ADa-para-establecer-un-centro-de-acopio-para-Covid-19-english.pdf>

To be a Bicycle relief volunteer ask people to comply with the following guidelines:

1. Register every person in the volunteer team and set up a form of communication or coordination. It can be Whatsapp or Zello APP. Participating in a coordinated effort will help avoid duplicated or useless trips or loss of materials. Ideally, you are of legal age or are otherwise accompanied by a responsible adult.

2. You should have a bicycle in good mechanical conditions, with lights, racks, saddlebags, or a heavy-duty backpack. Bicycles with heavy racks can be useful to carry cargo or someone. Be sure to have a puncture repair kit. Please wear a facemask, gloves and follow all the biosecurity instructions to avoid COVID contagion. If your bike isn't sturdy enough to ride on rough or damaged surfaces, make sure you help with light and fast trips for transport purposes such as food, medicines and medical supply deliveries.

3. Make sure you have enough internet data on your mobile phone, with maps and the Whatsapp and Zello apps available, and preferably with external batteries and a charger.

4. It is ideal that you carry a clean water container so that you keep hydrated, clean superficial wounds, moisten a handkerchief in dusty environments, among other basic needs.

5. Ideally you are wearing long sleeves and long pants to avoid sunburns, scratches and other damage from hazardous areas. Protective gear will help you during sudden weather changes, rain and outdoor sleeping in case it is needed.

6. Other materials that may be useful are duct tape, rope, bungies, spray disinfectant, spray paint.

7. Make sure you travel as light as possible so that you have more capacity to carry goods and tools, and improve your performance. Be ready to share water, food, batteries, internet data, with you fellow volunteers. If you are not carrying water or food with you, make sure you eat and hydrate at collection points, temporary shelters or disaster areas. It is paramount that you remain unharmed, safe and healthy so that you are able to continue to help.

8. In times of emergency, teamwork is essential. Always go out in groups of at least 5 volunteers. This is the best way to ensure mutual support in case of emergency, whether it is bicycle mechanical failures, communication breakdown, fatigue or injuries. Volunteers working in teams are more resilient and it becomes easier to complete journeys by maintaining collective energy and good spirits. For example, while some team members are entering disaster areas to deliver aid, others may stay outside to guard the bicycles. Make sure you have the contact information and, ideally, the live location of all the volunteers in the team to avoid losing track of them and so that they remain reachable by friends and family.