



How people reach out when the world is in trouble

John Rux-Burton, Founder and Managing Director, Shared Vision

It's easy to have a jaundiced view of the world, especially when such horrors are being unleashed. Nonetheless, over 25 years' experience of fundraising, I have become ever more optimistic about humankind. Maybe I am an eternal optimist, but I don't think so.

You see, every disaster in the world has been accompanied by a soaring rise in giving. 9/11 happened two days before a campaign at Somerville College, Oxford. The giving rate in that campaign was 76%. The tsunami at Aceh occurred over the Christmas period, and two weeks later, three of our campaigns had raised more than three quarters of a million between them. The global financial crisis dented people's capacity to donate. We had many who apologised for not being able to give... but though giving rates fell, the total given went up. That is because those who could, saw the need and dug deep.

We have witnessed this in the last month. Giving rates are up. Income is up. Are we raising money to help Ukraine? Well, yes and no.

No, because although some of the work we are doing assists medical science which, in such a conflict, is so important (a study of the siege of Leningrad shows that, in war, bombs are only one threat, and disease an even bigger one), our campaigns are not assisting the Red Cross or any of the amazing people trying to render direct help in this crisis.

But yes, because education is so important in building a world where the sort of violence in eastern Europe is ever more inappropriate and ever more opposed. History and economics, politics and literature teach us that war is never an answer, it is only ever crime... or a necessity for preservation of our loved ones and freedom. Science shows us how we can solve world problems without resorting to destruction (even if it also seems to give us ever more effective means of destruction). But that knowledge is nothing compared with simply educating students. The more people are educated, the more they can reason. The more they can reason, the more they can see the downside of conflict and have the tools to resort to diplomacy and compromise.

So, when people respond to crisis by giving their hard-earned cash to their fellow man, I smile. When they give knowing times may get more difficult, and the selfish would simply hoard, I rejoice. When they choose to support education, I applaud them for being in the long-game to build a world where the foulness of Putin and his like is repugnant to every citizen of this planet.

And they are giving, right now. And that is why I am ever more optimistic about humankind.