The aid pipeline that stretches from donors to victims of crisis and disaster has sprung multiple leaks. Yet few governments, with the notable exception of the US, are trying very hard to find out how much is lost to fraud between donor and victim. Each party in the process has a reason for avoiding publicity: humanitarian organizations do not want to scare off donors; governments do not want to admit taxpayers’ funds have gone astray; victims rarely have a voice; and fraudsters are more than happy to avoid the spotlight.

Yet if no one speaks publicly about the problem, there will be no pressure to grapple with it. Technology is the fraudster’s friend, yet it might also lead to a solution if it gives the most important people in the aid pipeline – the victims – the ability to speak out about whether they received what they were promised. Ultimately the largest donors and international organizations will have to get over their reluctance to admit there is a problem and co-ordinate their efforts to reduce disaster fraud.

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