

FEMA grants \$66 million to Methodists for Katrina counseling: Grant derived from donations made by foreign governments

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For a post-Katrina counseling program, the United Methodist Committee on Relief will receive a \$66 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that was derived from donations made by foreign governments, the *New York Times* has reported.

“We need a national network of case management to help families in their search for work or to help them move from one place to another,” said Natalie Rule, a FEMA spokeswoman quoted by the *Times*.

UMCOR, based in New York City and working in this instance with other charities, intends to hire 600 case managers who will work with volunteers and relief centers across the country.

The funds will be drawn from a total of \$120 million donated by dozens of nations. The United Arab Emirates gave the most—\$100 million, according to the State Department. A department spokesperson said the money was donated without conditions for its use.

Under the two-year grant, relief workers will contact both families who have returned to their homes but have repair, job or medical problems and families still staying in housing paid for by FEMA.

“The program will complement—not duplicate—ongoing government efforts,” Paul Dirdak, chief executive of UMCOR, told United Methodist News Service.

The grant is the largest ever received by UMCOR. “FEMA turned to UMCOR because of our competence in this sector and their confidence that we can provide

accountability,” Dirdak said.

One goal of the Methodist-led network is to give its partner agencies access to all case files through a unified reporting system. That way, Dirdak said, survivors and evacuees should be able to avoid paperwork bottlenecks and be assured of confidentiality.