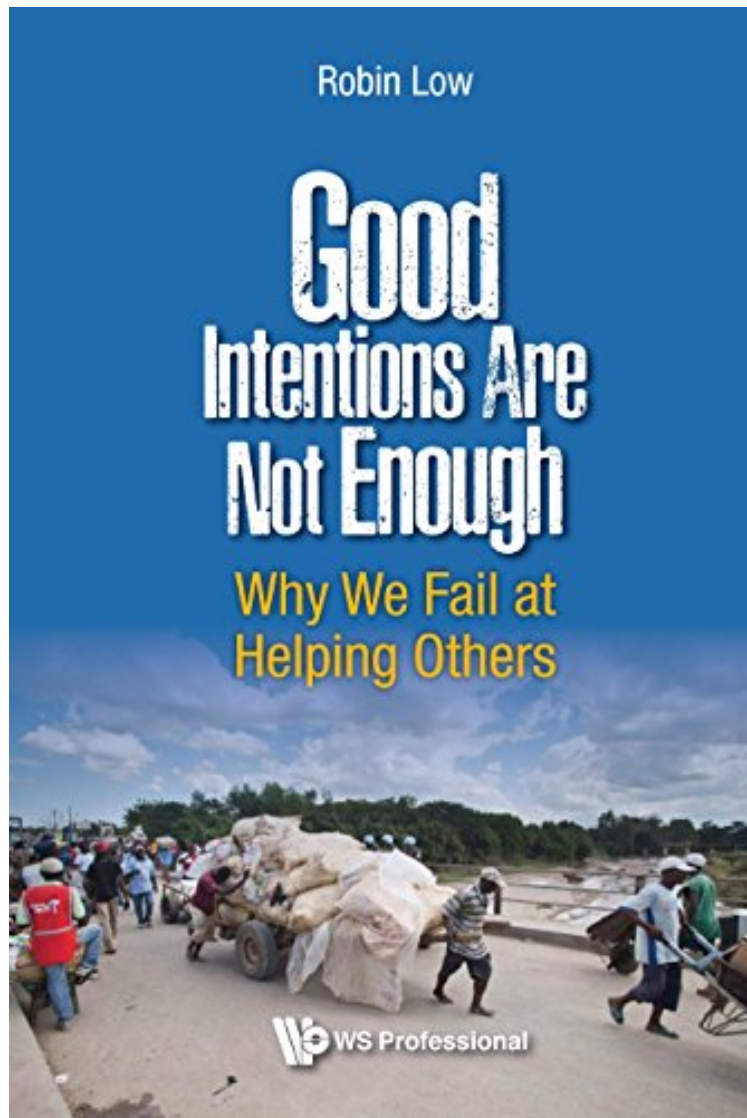


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Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Why We Fail at Helping Others

Robin Boon Peng Low
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Disaster strikes, transforming cities and towns into graveyards and wastelands in a matter of minutes. But help is on its way: news channels and social media relay the information to all corners of the globe in real-time, mobilising hundreds of people and organisations to aid. Yet, with standard relief packages regardless of the location, and a lack of effort taken to match volunteers' skills with tasks, just how effective are we at helping others? Many people want to do good, but they like to do it at their convenience. These attempts at helping often fail, and the blame invariably falls on the disaster victims, rather than looking at the suitability of aid provided. Such help, offered without a thorough understanding of the context or the impact of actions, can create situations that leave the victims worse off than before. So how can we create real sustainable impact? Most communities have a lot of unused human capacity. When offering help, many aid providers fail to engage the local communities, thus excluding a critical group of people with the knowledge of local ways and needs. This book elaborates on a simple principle essential to effective aid Never Help: Engage, Enable, Empower and Connect. It is important that we fully understand the problem before we try to solve it, and who better to help us with solutions than the local community? Readership: Volunteer welfare organisations, charities, foundations, people involved in post-disaster relief, social workers, schools/universities/students interested in volunteer activities.

About the Author Robin Low is the co-founder of Civil Innovation Lab, promoting social impact through civil action and local innovation. The Lab runs in collaboration with various universities including Stanford University to enhance efficiency and impact on social initiatives. He is also the principal consultant at the Patatas, advising corporations on CSR projects with real social impact, and promoting a new level of corporate / civil partnership to solve the world's pressing problems. Robin co-founded Relief 2.0, which promotes sustainable disaster recovery, by engaging, empowering, enabling and connecting survivors to the support they need. His work has taken him to more than 20 countries, where he shares how arts and craft, for example, can help communities support one another in times of disaster. Robin is now working on the recovery of Nepal. Robin owns Greenyarn LLC, a nanotechnology company based in Boston which manufactures sustainable socks, fabric and apparel for environmentally conscious consumers. He also founded Doing.gd, a social movement to help make volunteering and doing good easy, and is a mentor at Grameen Creative Labs.