

## **HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AFTER NATURAL DISASTERS**

**Forum:** 3rd committee – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural

**Issue:** Humanitarian Relief after Natural Disasters

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### **Description of issue:**

In recent years the number of natural disasters has increased to an all time high. Roughly 6,800 natural disasters happen per year which leads to an average 60,000 people being killed per year which makes up 0.1% of global deaths. When a natural disaster occurs there is something called “Disaster Aid” which is where specific programs provide money and services to people who are located in the declared area that has been affected by a natural disaster. There are times when countries cannot handle the aftermath of a natural disaster and call upon the help of other countries and the UN, however not all countries are lucky enough to receive and supply their citizens with proper aid.

**Main countries invloved:** Indonesia, USA, Australia, Haiti, Japan

### **Background information:**

Natural disasters have become an increasingly relevant issue in recent years due to climate change and have a negative impact in the area where the event happened. The United Nations coordinates humanitarian relief when natural disasters inflict destruction and devastation that is beyond what individual countries that have been affected can handle. There are many different programs scattered across the world that help out when a natural disaster occurs whether it's on a national or global scale.

A program that plays a big role in humanitarian relief is the United Nations Development Program, also known as the UNDP. They are responsible for natural disaster response, prevention and mitigation. Oftentimes when natural disasters happen the UNDP works with different governments to help with coordinating relief and rehabilitation efforts on a national level. In some countries, people have to be registered in order to receive humanitarian aid after a natural disaster, however due to climate change people who were not affected by natural

disasters before are now at risk and may not have access to humanitarian aid programs. The issue with this is that not everyone can afford insurance or register for relief aid after a natural disaster which causes problems because then they don't have anyone to help/support them. It's important to keep in mind that natural disasters don't only affect people, but also buildings, the environment and wildlife, so when considering aid post-disaster you have to take the land, architecture and wildlife into account.

When a natural disaster occurs, there is something called the **Disaster Management Cycle** which aims to help reduce/avoid the potential losses from natural hazards, while providing appropriate and prompt assistance to victims of the disaster in a fast and effective way. The phases that are a part of the cycle include mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Mitigation and preparedness are often phases that are placed before the actual disaster happens, while response and recovery are the phases that happen post-natural disaster.

**Mitigation** - Mitigation is minimizing the effects that a disaster could have on a community, examples include zoning, building codes, public education and a vulnerability analysis

**Preparedness** - This is important because its planning how to respond to natural disasters, examples include emergency exercises and training, warning systems and preparedness plans

**Response** - Efforts to minimize the hazards that were created by a disaster (this is the most known part of the management cycle), examples include emergency relief and search and rescue

**Recovery** - Working to help the community affected return back to normal after the disaster, examples include medical care, temporary housing and grants

When the effects of a natural disaster are too much for an individual country to handle, they often receive help from either different UN programs or from different countries. One thing that is mainly provided within humanitarian aid is funding - although there are government programs, businesses and private organizations that provide different forms of aid, a big one is the money that the country affected by the natural disaster needs in order to help get back on their feet. Natural disasters cause a lot of damage in the areas they affect which then correlates with those areas needing more money to help with the recovery process. One of the main forms of funding for natural disasters is from the OCHA also known as the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*.

Due to climate change having a rapid effect on society - natural disasters are happening more often than they used to, even in countries that used to not be affected. It is important for countries to have proper protocols in place and an organized and quick response for when the natural

disaster has passed. If a country cannot support themselves then they need to receive help from either the UN, other countries, or humanitarian aid specific programs.

### **Issues that should be addressed in the debate:**

*The lack of Humanitarian Aid in certain countries and how can the UN improve on it*

*Funding for Humanitarian Aid*

*Response after a Natural Disaster on a national scale*

*Response after a Natural Disaster on a global scale*

*International framework regarding communication and organization of Humanitarian Aid after a Natural Disaster*

### **Case Study - Australian Bushfires:**

The Australian bushfires are considered to be one of the worst natural disasters the world has faced in recent years, they started around the end of 2019 and ran through January-April of 2020. Approximately 42 million acres of land were destroyed and the bushfires were linked to at least 445 deaths (due to the smoke) and directly killed 33 people. The fires burned down over 1,000 of homes and it is estimated that 480 million animals had died since the fires started in late 2019. During the time period when the bushfires were happening, many countries offered assistance to Australia via firefighters, troops, helicopters and money. Some of the countries that provided aid to Australia on the ground include the United States, Singapore, New Zealand and Canada. UNICEF also offered their support to the Australian government - they have significant experience and expertise when responding to emergencies on a global scale, including natural disasters.

### **Statistics about Natural Disasters:**

- Roughly 6,800 natural disasters happen per year
- On average 60,000 people die in relation to natural disasters
- 0.1% of global deaths are related to natural disasters
- In 2015 over 1.1 million USD to support first emergency responses in following the earthquake in Nepal
- Asian Pacific region experienced 2nd highest number of natural disasters in 2020
- Number of natural disasters has increased by a factor of 5 over the past 50 years
- Most deadly events today tend to be earthquakes

- Natural disasters affect those in poverty the most
- Losses from natural disasters in 2020 totaled \$210 billion dollars (in 2019 it was \$166 billion)

### **Countries Commonly Affected by Natural Disasters:**

**Indonesia** - Indonesia is located in the Pacific Ring of Fire (area with high tectonic activity), and faces the risk of earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions. 166 people lost their lives in January of 2021 while in January 2020 only 91 people had lost their lives due to natural disasters. On average, ever since 2004, Indonesia has experienced a natural disaster each month. The Indonesia Disaster Resilience Initiatives Project (IDRIP) is a program run through the World Bank that was developed to help the country improve the preparedness of the central government and selected local government for natural disasters.

**United States of America** - The United States is the largest single provider of humanitarian assistance and is known to send both funding, supplies and first responders when another country is affected by natural disasters. Every year U.S. taxpayers give at least \$9.7 billion to the United Nations system through 58 different entities. Although the country provides disaster relief to other countries, they have also faced many natural disasters. The worst natural disaster the United States has faced was the 1900 Galveston Hurricane - the death toll was over 8,000 lives. The storm hit Galveston, Texas and was a category 4 hurricane. The U.S. Different types of natural disasters affect the different states - the west coast has dealt with wildfires for the past few years while the east coast is more prone to hurricanes. The U.S. is also prone to blizzards in cooler climates and flooding in regions affected by tropical weather/hurricanes.

**Australia** - Natural disasters that Australia commonly face include bushfires, droughts, floods, landslides, earthquakes, tropical cyclones and severe storms. In the past few years the Australian wildfires took the world by storm and many countries sent aid and first responders to help with the damage control. The Queensland floods happened from 2010-2011, over 78% of Queensland had been declared as a disaster zone and over 2.5 million people were affected, 33 of those people died. Australia is also a country with many coastal and tidal zones, and due to rising sea levels, the risk of flooding in those areas is increasing.

**Haiti** - Throughout history, the country Haiti has experienced cyclones, tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, torrential rains and earthquakes. According to the UNDP, natural disasters that happen in poorer countries tend to be more deadly - Haiti has a GDP of around 1,170 USD which in comparison to the United States GDP per capita is around 63,540 USD is quite small. Due to Haiti not having enough resources available when a natural disaster hits, they rely on aid from other countries.

**Key terms:**

**Natural Disasters** - Major adverse event resulting from natural processes of the Earth

**Hurricanes & Tropical Storms** - Also known as “Tropical Cyclone” are violent wind storms that form over tropical or subtropical waters

**Tornadoes** - Mobile, destructive vortex of violent rotating winds, looks like a funnel-shaped cloud

**Floods** - An overflow of water beyond normal limits, submerges land which is usually dry

**Wildfires** - Unplanned, uncontrollable, large, destructive fire that spreads rapidly over woodlands, grasslands, brushlands or land sown to crops

**Earthquakes** - Sudden and violent shaking of a surface as a result of movements in the earth's crust or volcanic action

**Droughts** - An event of prolonged and abnormally low rainfall which leads to a shortage in water supply

**Disaster Management Cycle** - Illustrates the ongoing process where businesses, governments, and civil society plan for the impact of disasters and react immediately following said disaster

**Sources every delegate/ambassador should study:**

2020: The Non-Covid Year in Disasters (Look into this source for overall statistics)

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20-%20the%20non-COVID%20Year%20in%20Disasters%20-%20Global%20Trends%20and%20Perspectives.pdf>

General knowledge about specific countries - website by US government

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries>

Information on SOCHUM

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>

Relief Organizations for Natural Disasters

<https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/relief-organizations-for-natural-disasters-150850.aspx>

Types of Natural Disasters

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/disaster-types>

Global examples of Humanitarian Aid from the UN

<https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/global-examples-humanitarian-aid-un/38249>

Disaster Management Cycle

[https://www.gdrc.org/uem/disasters/1-dm\\_cycle.html](https://www.gdrc.org/uem/disasters/1-dm_cycle.html)

EU Disaster Preparedness

[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/disaster\\_preparedness\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/disaster_preparedness_en)

Emergency Response 101

<https://www.directrelief.org/fundamentals-emergency-response/>

Facts and Statistics

<https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-global-catastrophes>

NOAA - United States

<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/>

Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response PDF

<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3d64ad7b1.pdf>

Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Situations PDF (published 1999)

<https://www.paho.org/disasters/dmdocuments/pedhuman.pdf>

OCHA Services

<https://reliefweb.int/>

United States Natural Disaster Statistics

<https://www.statista.com/topics/1714/natural-disasters/>