

# getconnected

A Global Education resource from World Vision

Disasters

September 2011

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**How do humans interact with our physical environment?**

**What are the impacts of disasters?**

**How do people respond to disasters?**



Destruction of homes on the hill side after the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Thousands of people were injured and killed in the falling rubble.

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### About this resource

How do humans interact with our physical environment?  
 What are the impacts of disasters?  
 How do people respond to disasters?

This issue of **Get Connected** encourages you to explore these questions and do something constructive with what you learn.

For additional resources visit  
[worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources)

Your comments on this resource are welcome at  
[gloaleducation@worldvision.com.au](mailto:gloaleducation@worldvision.com.au)

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Acknowledgements: Written by Rod Yule

Front cover image: 2010 Haiti earthquake.  
 Back cover image: 2011 Japan tsunami and earthquake.



## Hazards or disasters?

Hazards are natural. There is nothing humans can do to prevent a cyclone or an earthquake but we can prevent them from becoming a disaster. Earthquakes that occur in the wilderness are natural hazards, but when one occurs near a large city or human settlement, it has the potential to turn into a disaster.

Disasters can be **SUDDEN**. An estimated 300,000 people died in minutes when the Indian Ocean tsunami struck on 26 December 2004. Earthquakes are often sudden and allow little time for preparation.

OR

Disasters can be **GRADUAL**. Since 1998, some 5.4 million people have died in the Democratic Republic of Congo – victims of disease, malnutrition and armed conflict. Droughts and famines are often slow and gradual disasters.

Disasters can result from **NATURAL HAZARDS**. Examples include:

- 2011 Japan earthquake and \_\_\_\_\_
- 2011 Horn of Africa \_\_\_\_\_
- 2011 \_\_\_\_\_ Yasi in Queensland
- 2010 Haiti \_\_\_\_\_
- 2010 Pakistan \_\_\_\_\_

Disasters can also result from direct **HUMAN ACTION**. Examples include:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ in Afghanistan
- The coal \_\_\_\_\_ in New Zealand
- The 2010 Gulf of Mexico \_\_\_\_\_
- The September 11, 2001 act of \_\_\_\_\_ in USA.

Disasters like \_\_\_\_\_ can result from natural hazards or the actions of human beings.

Sometimes, a natural hazard can occur in the middle of a human-made disaster, making the devastation even greater. This happened in 2010, when flash floods hit the region of armed conflict in the north-west of Pakistan.



Children growing up in Afghanistan have experienced armed conflict all their lives.

### For You To Do!

Put the words below in the spaces available:

A collection of blue rectangular boxes containing disaster-related terms, arranged on a background of lined paper. The terms are: cyclone, drought, armed conflict, mine collapse, terrorism, bushfires, oil spill, tsunami, earthquake, and floods.



# How natural are disasters?

The world is facing \_\_\_\_\_ on a record scale. Since 2000, disasters have killed an average of 98,000 \_\_\_\_\_ each year and destroyed the homes and livelihoods of millions more. The frequency and intensity of disasters are increasing across the globe and increasingly government and non-government resources are required to address the consequences.

Globalisation and global warming have increased the impact of disasters around the world. Every day images of disasters are shown on \_\_\_\_\_ screens and in newspapers across the world.

Many disasters around the \_\_\_\_\_ occur naturally but their causes and impacts are affected by human \_\_\_\_\_. These include:

Graph 1: Trend of reported disasters (1975-2010)



Source: [unisdr.org/files/20108\\_mediabook.pdf](http://unisdr.org/files/20108_mediabook.pdf), p. 28

## 1. Climate change:

The ongoing damage to the Earth's fragile ecosystem and the impacts of climate \_\_\_\_\_ have contributed to an increase in the number of disasters such as floods, cyclones and typhoons.

## 2. Armed conflict:

Armed conflict has resulted in food shortages, malnutrition, environmental damage, increased spread of disease, death, disability, and the abuse of women and \_\_\_\_\_. The United Nations estimates there are currently 25 million internally displaced people (IDPs) as a result of armed \_\_\_\_\_.

## 3. Poverty:

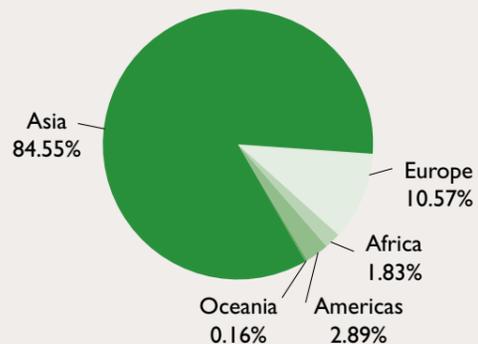
Communities living in \_\_\_\_\_ are most vulnerable to the destruction caused by natural hazards and armed conflict. In poor countries, the death toll from disasters is typically much greater than that in high income \_\_\_\_\_. Because these communities can't afford proper \_\_\_\_\_ materials, their houses and schools are often unsafe and more likely to be destroyed. These families then have no money left to start over or resettle in safer areas.

## 4. Urbanisation and population growth:

Today, the world's \_\_\_\_\_ has increased to just over 7 billion and this has transformed natural environments. Increasing numbers of people are living in more densely populated urban centres and having to \_\_\_\_\_ in more risk-prone areas, like earthquake zones and floodplains.

Natural hazards cannot be prevented, but their impacts can be reduced. Aid and development \_\_\_\_\_ seek to provide emergency relief and reconstruction for affected communities. However, as part of a long-term commitment to development, an essential activity is to work with \_\_\_\_\_ to reduce the impact of natural hazards and to be prepared when they do occur.

Graph 2: Percentage of people killed by disasters by region, (2000-2009)



Source: [unisdr.org/files/20108\\_mediabook.pdf](http://unisdr.org/files/20108_mediabook.pdf), p. 28



Families leave villages to find safety from the 2010 Pakistan floods. Floods are a natural part of the Earth's biophysical processes. They become disasters when the effects are made more extreme by human activity such as clearing of vegetation, deforestation, and human settlement on river banks.

## For You To Do!

1. Use the words below to complete the text opposite:

communities    poverty    disasters    population    change  
 children    organisations    live    countries    world  
 people    television    building    conflict    activity

2. Use the information in Graph 1 on page 4 and complete the table below:

Year	Number of natural disasters
1983	
1990	
2000	
2010	



3. Write a report on disasters using the information in Graphs 1 and 2. What is the trend in disasters and suggest a reason? How has human activity contributed to this trend? How are different regions of the world affected? Why is the death toll greater in poor countries?



# Disasters across the world

Humans interact with the four changing spheres of the physical environment – the land (lithosphere), water (hydrosphere), air (atmosphere), and living things (biosphere).

Disasters involving rapid earth or land movements include earthquakes, volcanoes, avalanches and landslides. Disasters involving water include floods, tsunamis and droughts – the absence of water. Disasters involving changes in the atmosphere include hurricanes and cyclones. Disasters involving living things include oil spills, armed conflict and outbreaks of disease.



Where: **Democratic Republic of Congo**  
When: Since 1998 and ongoing  
What: Civil conflicts  
Impact: 5.4 million people have died due mainly to starvation, disease and armed conflicts



Where: **Horn of Africa**  
(Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda)  
When: July 2011 and ongoing  
What: Worst drought in 60 years and famine  
Impact: 13 million people affected

Where: **Pakistan**  
When: July 2010  
What: Floods  
Impact: 20.5 million people affected. 1,985 people killed.



Where: **Indian Ocean**  
(Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh)  
When: 26 December 2004  
What: 9.3 magnitude earthquake and tsunami  
Impact: 300,000 people killed



Where: **Japan**  
When: March 2011  
What: 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami  
Impact: More than 50 million people affected. Some 15,300 died.

Where: **USA**  
When: April - July 2010  
What: Gulf of Mexico oil spill  
Impact: 11 killed and 17 injured. Extensive damage to marine and wildlife habitats and to the Gulf's fishing and tourism industries.



Where: **Haiti**  
When: January 2010  
What: 7.0 magnitude earthquake  
Impact: 3 million people affected. 230,000 killed.

Where: **Chile**  
When: February 2010  
What: 8.8 magnitude earthquake  
Impact: More than 700 people killed



Where: **Australia**  
When: Dec 2010 - Jan 2011  
What: Queensland floods  
Impact: 35 killed. Over 200,000 people were affected.



Where: **New Zealand**  
When: February 2011  
What: 6.3 magnitude earthquake in Christchurch  
Impact: 181 people killed.

## For You To Do!

1. Find another 10 disasters and plot them on a blank world map. Download the map at [worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources)
2. For the latest information on world disasters visit [reliefweb.int](http://reliefweb.int) or [alertnet.org](http://alertnet.org)



# Impacts of disasters

The immediate effects of a disaster are clear for all to see through the images on television – death, injuries, loss of homes and the destruction of buildings. Other social, economic and environmental impacts are less obvious and happen after the cameras have left.



▲ **Disease:** After a disaster, tens of thousands may crowd into emergency shelters that have poor sanitation and limited clean water, food and medicine. In this setting, infectious diseases can spread quickly and add to the death toll.



▲ **Hunger and malnutrition:** When people lose their usual way of making a living or their crops are destroyed, food becomes scarce and people experience hunger and malnutrition. Emergency rations may not last till the next harvest or until businesses get underway again.



▲ **Infrastructure and business:** In poor countries, infrastructure (i.e. roads, businesses, schools and hospitals, communication and energy systems) is limited and precious. Disasters can destroy years of development work. Rebuilding these essential items is costly and slow.



▲ **Distress:** It is normal for survivors of a disaster to experience distress. Some reactions can include crying, sadness and deep grief. Programs need to encourage increased family and community support for people affected by the crisis and help people return to a normal routine.



▲ **Environment:** The 2004 tsunami led to increased salinity across fertile coastal land. This would affect the land's ability to grow necessary crops. In response, aid and development organisations worked to "wash" the fields and paddy lands to remove the salinity.



▲ **Women and children:** The hardest hit in a disaster tend to be the poorest and most vulnerable – children, the elderly, women, and the disabled. They may require additional support and protection as part of the disaster response activities.

## For You To Do!

1. Read p. 8 and identify the economic, social and environmental impacts of disasters.
2. Complete the mind map showing how a disaster affects different parts of a child's life. Rank these 1-8 in order of importance for you in the boxes provided.



## Did you know?

Since 1990, an estimated 80 percent of global conflict-related deaths have been women and children.



# Pakistan: case study

Pakistan is in southern Asia and borders the Arabian Sea in the south, Iran and Afghanistan in the west, India in the east and China in the north. The country is mountainous in the north-west and has the flat Indus River plain in the south-east.

In 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake killed 73,000 people and in 2009, armed conflict in the north-west forced 700,000 people from their homes. In 2010, major floods killed nearly 2,000 people. It is a country with significant levels of poverty.

## Causes: What happened?

At the end of July 2010, summer monsoon rains triggered flash floods and landslides across Pakistan. The rivers breached their banks, and river floods gradually moved from north to south along the Indus River to the southern provinces of Sindh and Punjab before discharging into the Arabian Sea.

During September 2010, there was fresh flooding. In January 2011, floodwater still remained in parts of Sindh. The floods left an area larger than the whole of Victoria, Australia under water.

## Impacts: Who was affected and how many?

Some 1,985 people were killed, 2,366 injured, and about 20.5 million people were affected either through displacement, property damages and losses. This is one-fifth of the population of Pakistan, equivalent to almost the whole population of Australia.

The worst-hit provinces were Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab and Sindh provinces. Mud houses were washed away, leaving people living along roadsides, on rooftops and seeking higher ground. Eleven million were made homeless. Some entire villages were cut off as roads and bridges collapsed. Significant losses to livestock and damage to agricultural crops, fields and warehouses for grain storage means more hunger in the longer term.

The floods also damaged forests, washed away forest nurseries, and affected the habitats of wild animals – including migratory birds, wild boars, deer, hare and the endangered Indus dolphin.



Map of Pakistan  
Map courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

CATEGORY	AUSTRALIA	PAKISTAN
Population	22.4 million	187.3 million
Population living on less than US\$1.25 a day (%)	Nil	22.6
GDP per capita (US\$)	40,286	2,625
Under-five mortality (per 1000 live births)	6	89
Literacy	99%	49.9%
Average years of schooling	12	4.9
Internally displaced persons	Nil	952,035
Life expectancy at birth	81.2 years	65.9 years
Urban population	89%	36%

Source: United Nations Human Development Report 2010



## For You To Do!

Complete the table below:

Cause of the floods	Social impacts	Economic impacts	Environmental impacts



# Response to Pakistan floods

## How have communities responded?

The Government of Pakistan led the rescue and relief activities in response to the 2010 floods. Dozens of boats and helicopters were deployed to evacuate thousands of people who were trapped in areas without access to food or services. Many non-government organisations (NGOs) like World Vision worked together with the United Nations and the government to coordinate effective emergency relief. World Vision has six projects in the flood response efforts and these are in the provinces of Sindh, Punjab and KPK.

## Emergency phase (August - October 2010)

Since August 2010, World Vision has provided food and emergency items such as tents, cooking sets, gas cylinders, bedding, hygiene kits and water purification tablets. It has also provided medical treatment, run hygiene and health promotion sessions, and installed water tanks in communal areas of villages to relieve suffering and increase the chances of survival for communities.

It also established Child Friendly Spaces. Children are the most vulnerable in any disaster and the lack of adequate shelter, food, water and healthcare places them at extreme risk. Families walked through rain and mud for hours to find refuge and many survivors were upset and afraid. Many children experienced problems such as diarrhoea, skin infections and grief. These spaces provided a safe place for children to receive support, health information and educational activities.



"Back home, I used to stay busy the whole day cooking food, taking care of livestock, working in the fields and in my extra time stitching clothes for some money," said 30-year-old Zubaida, who is nine months pregnant and comes to the centre. "Here in the camp, I have too much time and get bored in the tent. When I heard that the centre had sewing machines I thought it is my chance. I woke up early in the morning and went to the centre. I was so excited and happy about it; I stitched clothes today and helped seven girls with stitching and embroidery, which I enjoy most."

World Vision also set up a Women and Infant Friendly Space. In this space, women had a private area in which to interact with other women, breastfeed their children, receive information on health, hygiene and nutrition, and learn skills such as sewing and embroidery. More than 250 women and children came to the tent every day.

## Recovery-transition phase (November 2010 - ongoing)

World Vision Pakistan hired local people to clean out the debris from affected areas and damaged irrigation channels have been reconstructed. Wheat seed and agricultural kits have been distributed to farmers and 10,000 trees have been planted. Goats and poultry have also been distributed. A Pakistani-born Australian scientist, Shahbaz Khan, is working with UNESCO to improve Pakistan's flood forecasting and early warning systems. As with Australians after the Queensland floods, the Pakistani people have learnt lessons about how to better manage floodgates and dams to control floodwaters.

At the same time, one year after the 2010 floods, hundreds of thousands of Pakistani people again experienced flooding in the 2011 monsoon season. Slowly, the Pakistani people are learning to manage the risk and be better prepared.

## Did you know?

Floods affect more people than any other hazard. Some 1.5 billion people were affected by floods in the last decade of the 20th century. Worldwide, nearly 200 million live in coastal zones at risk of flooding.



Standing at the edge of the floodwaters, survivors jostle for limited supplies brought by relief boat. At first, army boats bringing supplies were the only source of food, drinking water and medicines.

## For You To Do!

1. Watch the short film "Communities need to be rebuilt" at [worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources)
2. Use de Bono's six thinking hats to explore the information on the 2010 Pakistan floods (p. 10-13).



**White hat:** Write down some of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Pakistan floods.



**Red hat:** Imagine you are Zubaida. What would you be feeling after the flood? Anger, sadness, frustration, hope, despair, disappointment, thankfulness - or something else?



**Black hat:** What was the most shocking impact of the floods for you?



**Yellow hat:** What is the most encouraging or hopeful response to the Pakistan floods?



**Green hat:** Suggest some ways that your school could respond to a major disaster in another part of the world.



**Blue hat:** What new insight have you gained from looking at the Pakistan floods?



# Responding to disasters

In responding to a disaster, the communities affected are the first to respond to the emergency and drive their own recovery.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) like World Vision then work in partnership with the government of the country affected and the United Nations to coordinate their response to the disaster.

World Vision has been working with communities in Pakistan since 1992, so when the floods hit, staff had relationships in the area and were able to work with communities where it was most needed. Since the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the following stages of response have overlapped according to what people needed:

## Emergency Phase

This includes an assessment to determine the needs of the people and the scale of the disaster. The first priority is saving lives and helping people feel secure. This involves the provision of:

- Essential food and water
- Short-term shelter
- First aid equipment and medical help
- Search and rescue by the community and government workers



**Trigger Point - Disaster Causes a Crisis!**

## Recovery Phase

After the immediate danger is over, the second priority is to help the community to return to normal. This includes:

- Repairing buildings and clearing debris
- Repairing water and electricity supplies
- Helping people return to work
- Providing food supplies
- Providing psychosocial support



## Reconstruction Phase

This phase can start quite early, but may take years to complete as the community transitions from emergency to development. People begin to:

- Reconstruct permanent homes
- Return to normal agriculture and fishing
- Repair roads, schools and public buildings



## Disaster Preparation

This ongoing phase enables communities to make improvements and plan for future disasters so they are better prepared. This may include:

- Training in first aid
- Training in how to respond to a disaster
- Improving the construction of buildings
- Developing early warning signs
- Mapping potential threats and vulnerable areas



# Did you know?

Cassowaries are an endangered bird species in North Queensland. After Cyclone Larry (2005) damaged their rainforest environment, many birds perished from starvation. After Cyclone Yasi (2011) lessons were learnt and feeding stations were established for cassowaries in their rainforest habitats. Disasters often damage habitats and food sources for different species.

## For You To Do!

In a small group, imagine you are an emergency relief team for the floods in Pakistan. Your assessment shows the floods have destroyed everything in the town. People have no drinking water or food. Most only have the clothes they are wearing. It is a time of high rainfall and there is nowhere to shelter.

You need to decide which supplies people need most at different times. Discuss the different needs of women, men and children. How do you decide which items to provide for a family?

Choose five items a family would need by day three; another five items that would be needed by day 14 and another five items needed by day 90. Compare your lists with other groups and give reasons for your decisions.

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Soap              | Food (Rice)              |
| Cricket bat       | Seeds                    |
| Fishing nets      | Cooking pots/utensils    |
| Tool kit          | 10 litre water container |
| Water bucket      | Blankets                 |
| Clothing          | Tents                    |
| Building supplies | First aid kit            |
| Toys              | School books             |
| Lantern/torch     | Television               |
| Mosquito nets     | Gas stove                |
| Money             | Food bowls/utensils      |

URGENT (DAYS 1-3)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

SHORT TERM (DAYS 7-14)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

LONG TERM (DAY 90)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Watch the video "What do you really need to survive?" (2 min 37) at [worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources)



# Haiti earthquake



Map of Haiti

Map courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

## Cause:

On 12 January 2010, the plates of the earth's crust moved and three million Haitians were affected by the massive earthquake that struck near the capital of Port-au-Prince. This is about one-third of the whole population of Haiti.

## Impacts:

More than 200,000 people were killed and millions of survivors lost their homes and loved ones. Seventy percent of homes were damaged or destroyed and 1.5 million people were made homeless.

In October 2010, there was also a major outbreak of cholera. This "disaster within a disaster" affected more than 80,000 people and killed nearly 2,000 people.

Even before the earthquake, Haiti had major environmental problems. Intensive logging reduced Haiti's forest cover from 60 percent to less than two percent in 2011. This lack of trees causes soil erosion problems, threatening both food and clean water sources for hungry and thirsty people.

Haiti's fast-growing population has pushed millions of Haitians into marginal areas like floodplains and onto land that could otherwise be used profitably. Fertile land areas are often used for slums, while hillsides and steep landscapes are used for agriculture. Sanitation problems have stepped up cases of dysentery, malaria and tuberculosis. Haiti's water pollution problems – rubbish-filled beaches and waterways – are now made worse by the earthquake.

## Responses:

Responding to an earthquake of such magnitude would be complicated even in wealthy nations like Australia. Even before the earthquake, the people of Haiti did not have adequate access to water, sanitation, education, employment, shelter or food. The earthquake then compounded existing problems.

Though there has been much progress in Haiti, the road to recovery is slow. In 2011, more than one million people remain homeless, due in many cases to conflicts over land ownership and overwhelming amounts of remaining rubble.

In response to the disaster, Australian donors provided \$10 million to World Vision's relief and reconstruction efforts.

CATEGORY	HAITI	AUSTRALIA
Population	10.2 million	
Urban population	52.1%	
Access to safe water	63%	100%
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)		
Life expectancy at birth		
Literacy rate	61%	

Source: United Nations Human Development Report 2010



Survivors stand on top of rubble from the earthquake in Haiti.



## Did you know?

Disaster risk reduction strategies and better building codes reduce the impact of disasters. For example, Chile's 8.8 magnitude earthquake in 2010 killed one person out of every 595 affected. Haiti's earthquake, 500 times less powerful, killed one in every 15 affected. Chile's building codes and construction techniques helped save lives.

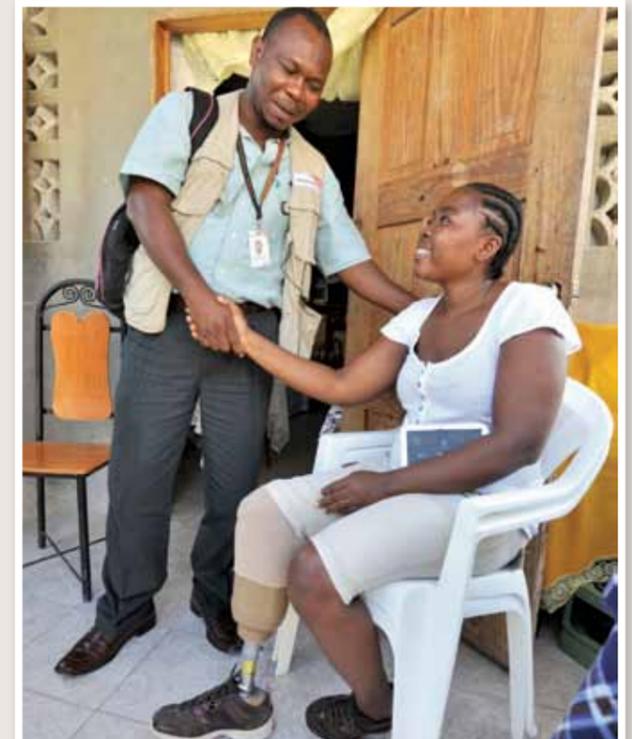
### An example of recovery

Fabiola, a single mother and small-trader, was in her home when the earthquake struck Haiti. As the house collapsed she was knocked unconscious and pinned by the rubble. She was eventually rescued and taken to a field hospital; however her leg had been badly injured and became infected. Doctors had to amputate her leg below the knee.

She had not only lost her leg, but also her small business, and wondered how she would find work to support her family.

According to World Vision Haiti's Disability Manager, Jony St. Louis expectations for people with disabilities are low in Haiti. "Many people think all they are fit for is begging on the streets. This increases disabled people's depression. One of our jobs is to help them believe in their own capacity and work with them to help them go forward."

Once amputees have regained confidence, they are given training to develop their own businesses, and are eligible for grants to help get their lives back on track. Fabiola participated in this training and received a grant. She is using her grant to send her son to school, and is working to establish a small grocery store that will stock items not easily available in her neighbourhood.



World Vision Haiti's Disability Manager and Fabiola discuss her plans for the future.

## For You To Do!

1. Complete the table opposite. Estimate the data for Haiti and find the data for Australia from the table on p. 10. Use the internet to check your estimates for Haiti. Were you close?
2. Watch the short film clips about the Haiti earthquake at [worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources)
3. Identify the similarities and differences in responding to disasters in developing countries like Haiti and developed countries like Australia.



# Disaster preparation

When a disaster strikes, children are the most vulnerable group in the population, especially those who are attending school.



The destruction from the 2005 Pakistan earthquake made it impossible to even walk down the street in this town. Over 70,000 people were killed in this disaster.

Disasters such as the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, where 17,000 children were killed in collapsed schools, show why action needs to be taken to protect children before disasters strike. Millions of children across the world attend schools in buildings that are unable to withstand the forces of nature.

In 2006, the United Nations launched a new program to "disaster-proof" schools and push governments to make lessons on natural disasters part of the curriculum. Children who are taught about disasters can play an important role in saving lives and protecting members of the community.

For example, when the December 2004 tsunami struck a beach in Thailand, Tilly Smith, a British schoolgirl, saved many lives by urging people to run from the shore after seeing the tide rush out. She remembered her geography lesson on earthquakes and tsunamis. It was one of the few beaches in the area where no one was reported killed or seriously injured.

Even as disasters affect more and more people around the world, the number of people killed is decreasing. The death toll is coming down due to better preparation and prevention by governments, community organisations and individuals.

## Did you know?

After the 2004 tsunami, the Sri Lankan Government introduced a law that no new building is permitted within 100-200 metres of the coastline. Effective building laws are important to protect people and reduce the impact of natural hazards.



# Disaster risk preparation helps prevent Cyclone Yasi casualties

A high level of disaster risk awareness, preparedness and planning helped prevent casualties when Tropical Cyclone Yasi struck north-east Australia in February 2011. The United Nations top disaster risk official Margareta Wahlstrom urged other countries to invest in improving their capacity to respond to such disasters.

"What people bill as a miracle comes down to understanding risk, knowing how to reduce vulnerability and minimise exposure to risk," said Ms Wahlstrom. News reports told of Australians bunkering down in their homes, evacuating shopping centres or driving to safer places further south.

The Premier of Queensland, Ms Anna Bligh, told people, "Don't bother to pack bags, just grab each other and get to an area of safety. Remember, people are irreplaceable." Three statewide SMS alerts were sent out to more than 200,000 people before the cyclone and people had regular access to information and warnings on radio and television.

Cyclone Yasi crossed into Queensland with wind gusts of 250 kilometres per hour. The eye of the cyclone was 100 kilometres wide, but despite its category five strength, there were no reports of serious injuries or fatalities.

Australia has a long history of dealing with extreme weather – from Cyclone Tracy in 1975 to Cyclone Larry in 2006 – which has offered the country lessons on resilience. "Not every at-risk country has the same level of risk awareness as Australia which is worrying because any of them stand a chance of being hit by the next big storm," said Ms Wahlstrom.

Governments around the world need to build resilience amongst everyday people, and recognise that no city is immune from disaster.



Homes and crops were destroyed by Cyclone Yasi but a high level of disaster preparation meant there were no fatalities.

## For You To Do!

1. In a small group, prepare a set of recommendations that would help protect an Australian community from either (i) a bushfire (ii) an earthquake or (iii) a cyclone. See [ema.gov.au](http://ema.gov.au) for ideas.
2. Suggest reasons why people live in areas that are affected by earthquakes, bushfires and cyclones. How do reasons differ if people are wealthy or poor?



## Behind the news

# DISASTER STRIKES!

**L**ights, camera, action! It happens at least once a year. For a few brief weeks, some desperate corner of the world becomes a flurry of international activity. The TV cameras focus, satellite dishes dance with action, hotels brim with journalists and the local people are portrayed in living colour around the world – either in their misery or in a feeding line, being given an emergency meal.

Suddenly, and just as quickly, the focus shifts to another part of the world. After the most sensational part of the story has finished, after the emergency rations have been given out, after the crisis has calmed, journalists pack away their cameras and notebooks and the hotels empty. The cyclone or war moves off page one and on a good day, gets a mention in the back of the paper. Public interest wanes and donations slow to a trickle.



Images of devastation caused by disasters, like this from the Haiti earthquake, are important to ensure media coverage.

But a year later, when the real rebuilding should be taking place, the money has dried up and only a handful of aid organisations remain. The long-term recovery process and ongoing struggles are rarely featured.

# REPORTING DISASTERS

**Disaster stories are popular with the media. However, some disasters are more popular than others. These include:**

**1. Local disasters.** Smaller disasters which happen in Australia or involve Australians are more popular than more significant disasters that occur overseas – especially in developing countries with which Australians are not familiar.

**2. Sudden or rapid onset disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis.** Gradual and ongoing disasters like droughts, famines and land degradation receive less coverage than the more "spectacular" disasters.

**3. Disasters occurring in England or the USA.** The influence of American and English media in Australia means greater coverage is given to these countries.

**4. Disasters that are sensational and include dramatic images.** The popular media prefers footage of spectacular escapes, gruesome death, heroic rescues or "survival against the odds" stories. A common media saying is, "If it bleeds, it leads." Major disasters and tragedies that are not filmed receive little coverage.

## Did you know?

World Vision raised funds required to implement a 90 day relief plan for the most severely affected areas in Japan's 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Approximately 83,000 people were supported in evacuation centres. This included the provision of relief items of clothing and food and psychosocial support. Under what circumstances should organisations like World Vision provide relief to wealthy, developed countries like Japan?

# SURVIVOR

## THE JAPANESE TSUNAMI

**Friday 11 March 2011**

A 9.0 magnitude earthquake off the north east coast of Japan triggered a 10 metre tsunami that caused extensive damage and washed entire communities away. More than 50 million people were affected; some 15,300 people died, almost 100,000 were evacuated and 8,200 people missing. A nuclear emergency was also declared following explosions at various nuclear power plants in the Fukushima area.

Mr Muraoka is 60 years old and one of the survivors from the earthquake and tsunami that swept away his town of Minami Sanriku. With a population of 20,000, half of the population was killed with more than 8,000 people displaced. Mr Muraoka lost six relatives.



Snow and freezing temperatures make recovery efforts even more difficult.



Mr Muraoka meets with World Vision staff in a local school shelter.

*"The tsunami came 25 minutes after the earthquake but here, we are all used to earthquakes and tsunamis and we received training on what to do when something like that happens. So I ran to the evacuation place but this time, the waves were much higher than usual. I had to run further up into the hills and I remember vividly that 30 others were running with me."*

*"The night was cold and only two houses remained untouched by the tsunami, we stayed two nights there. There was no electricity, it was dark. We started a small fire and used snow water to boil rice. It was just a small amount but we all shared that meal together."*

## For You To Do!

1. Identify the language features of the media story above. What features are used to capture and hold the reader's attention or interest?
2. Keep a list of disaster stories appearing in the media and record your findings in the table at [worldvision.com.au/schoolresources](http://worldvision.com.au/schoolresources). For example:

Name of story/article/headline	Source	Country	Disaster	Impact
10 KILLED!	ABC TV News	China	Flood	10 killed Thousands homeless

3. Look up [alertnet.org](http://alertnet.org) to see which recent disasters are not being reported in the Australian media.



# Great debates

## Should Australia work with developing nations at all times - or just at times of disaster?

Typically, Australians have been very generous when major disasters strike developing countries. However, during the Australian floods in 2010-2011, there were some Australian voices in the media who claimed that "charity begins at home" and we should cut our support for developing countries so that we can support our own people suffering in the floods. There are others who give generously when disaster strikes but do not see any need to continue to support work in developing countries. On the other hand, others argue that it is Australia's responsibility to work in long-term partnership with developing countries – not just at times of disaster.

Firstly, there are those who argue that it is not the responsibility of Australians to support the development of poor countries. These people suggest that Australians need to look after our own people in need. This is the "charity begins at home" argument.

Secondly, it is argued that Australia is very generous in supporting nations after a disaster – but there has to be a limit. For example, Australians were very active and generous in supporting the Pakistan floods and the Haiti earthquake in 2010 but it is unreasonable to expect Australians to work with poor countries in an ongoing way.

Also, it is proposed that developing nations need to learn to stand on their own two feet and be independent. It is the responsibility of governments in developing countries to provide for the needs of their own people.

In contrast, it is argued that long-term work with developing countries is affordable for a very rich country like Australia. Australia can afford to look after the needs of vulnerable people in Australia and work with the poor in developing countries. The needs of the poor in developing countries are very great and cannot be ignored. Charity can begin at home but it does not have to end at home.

Next, long-term work is strategic because it helps developing countries to reduce poverty, prepare for disasters and know how to better respond when they strike. This means that less people are injured or killed. It is sensible to make the long-term commitment to help train and prepare communities for future disasters. Also, when poverty is reduced, communities are stronger and more resilient when disasters do strike. People live, work and go to school in more secure buildings.

Finally, as we live in a globally interconnected world and see people missing out on their basic human rights for safe water, education and food, we have a responsibility to act. This is more than charity or kindness and is an act of social justice to ensure basic human rights around the world.

In conclusion, I believe that Australians need to work in long-term partnerships with developing countries. While the governments in poor countries are responsible to provide for their own people, the needs of poor communities are very great and their governments need support to provide the basic services we take for granted in a rich country like Australia. Looking at the evidence, I believe that Australia has a responsibility to work in long-term partnerships with developing countries – not just at times of disaster.



Unsafe, poorly built houses led to the collapse of this whole hillside in Haiti.



Floods washed away roads in Pakistan and made it difficult to bring urgent supplies to flood-affected areas. The rebuilding of roads is part of the long-term disaster recovery.

## For You To Do!

Use the structure and language features of the discussion text on pg.22 as a model to write your own discussion text on the following topic. You first need to sort the arguments into the correct for and against groups.

### 1. In a disaster, the media do more harm than good.

- The media presents stereotypes of people in developing countries as hopeless and helpless victims rather than survivors whose reactions are normal given their experience
- The media provides important and essential information about disasters
- The media helps inform people so they can better respond to disasters
- The media is only interested in spectacular disasters that include images
- The media increases awareness of other countries and help Australians have empathy with their suffering
- The media is only interested in simple stories and ignores more complex, long-term issues for developing countries

## Did you know?

More than 680,000 people died in earthquakes between 2000-2010 due mainly to poor buildings. Earthquakes are the deadliest disasters on all continents except Africa, where droughts and famine remain the highest disaster killers.



# Different perspectives

People around the world have different perspectives on disasters. The cartoons on these pages show some of these different viewpoints.

1. **LIFE IN THIS CAMP IS TOUGH - NOT ENOUGH FOOD, CLEAN WATER OR PRIVACY**  
**SINCE WE CAME TO THE CAMP WE'VE HAD HEALTH PROBLEMS... DIARRHOEA, FEVER & SKIN INFECTIONS**

2. **THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH OUR ASIA-PACIFIC NEIGHBOURS TO IMPROVE THEIR DISASTER PREPARATION. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF AUSAID'S WORK.**

3. **IT WAS TERRIFYING. I CLEARED THE LEAVES OUT OF THE GUTTERS & FILLED THEM WITH WATER. THEN I GOT IN THE BATH**  
**I'VE NEVER BEEN SO SCARED! LUCKILY WE'VE GOT INSURANCE - WHICH WILL PAY FOR REBUILDING**

4. **CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME! AUSTRALIANS NEED TO LOOK AFTER OUR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FLOOD, DROUGHT & BUSH-FIRE**  
**WE SHOULD CUT OUR AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES!!**

5. **THE PEOPLE OF PAKISTAN HAVE BEEN THROUGH SO MANY DISASTERS**  
**I WANNA HELP THESE PEOPLE - THEIR LIVES HAVE BEEN WRECKED BY THESE FLOODS**  
**THEY'VE GOT A RIGHT TO LIFE TOO!**  
**WE HELP THE COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE THEIR EMERGENCY NEEDS... FOOD, CLEAN WATER & SHELTER**  
**WE'LL STAY AND DO RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION WORK - FOR SOME YEARS TO COME.**  
**THE PEOPLE ARE PRETTY RESILIENT & HARDWORKING**

7. **OUR SCHOOL DECIDED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HAITI WHEN WE HEARD ABOUT THE DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE**  
**AND WE'RE RAISING MONEY TO SUPPORT THE RELIEF WORK**

8. **WE LEFT OUR HOUSE AS SOON AS WE HEARD THE WARNING SIGNAL**  
**WE KNEW WE HAD TO HEAD FOR HIGHER GROUND**  
**SO WE RAN!**

9. **PAKISTAN IS A LONG WAY AWAY. THE FOOTAGE ISN'T THAT AMAZING.**  
**I'M NOT SURE OUR AUSSIE AUDIENCE WILL BE INTERESTED IN ANOTHER FLOOD DISASTER**

10. **THE HOUSE CRASHED DOWN AND I WAS BURIED UNDER THE RUBBLE**  
**OUR HOUSES ARE NOT WELL BUILT**  
**MANY OF MY SCHOOL FRIENDS ARE MISSING... PROBABLY DEAD**

## For You To Do!

Match the cartoon with the following perspectives (1-10):

- \_\_\_ Australian school teacher
- \_\_\_ Australian radio announcer
- \_\_\_ Pakistan floods survivor
- \_\_\_ Australian Member of Parliament
- \_\_\_ survivor living in an internally displaced persons camp
- \_\_\_ Australian bushfire survivor
- \_\_\_ Haiti earthquake survivor
- \_\_\_ Australian news director
- \_\_\_ NGO humanitarian relief workers
- \_\_\_ Australian donor



# 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami - revisited

Two weeks after the Indian Ocean tsunami, many cities and towns were still completely devastated. Thousands of people had been killed and many more were still missing. Schools, shops, homes, transport, communication and power systems had all been destroyed.



The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami destroyed the town of Keudah on the Pennayong River in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This photo was taken two weeks after the tsunami hit.

Two years after the tsunami, recovery and reconstruction efforts meant that communities were functioning with rebuilt schools, houses and roads. Many of the countries affected have now introduced greater disaster preparation programs and early warning systems for their people.



Two years on, this same town had been rebuilt. World Vision has worked with the local community to rebuild houses, schools and roads.



# Reflection and action

I was surprised to find out . . .

The most interesting thing I learnt was . . .

I'd like to know more about . . .

I wonder if . . .

I don't understand . . .

A disaster that could impact my house or school is . . .

One thing that I would like to do is . . .

# Quiz

1. What type of disaster kills more people across the world?

- (a) floods (b) cyclones (c) earthquakes (d) famines

2. What type of disaster kills the most people in Africa?

- (a) earthquakes (b) famines (c) cyclones (d) floods

3. Which region has the greatest number of people killed in disasters?

- (a) Africa (b) America (c) Australia (d) Asia

4. How many disasters were reported in 2010?

- (a) 373 (b) 173 (c) 873 (d) 573

5. Which of the following does not help explain the increasing number of people affected by disasters?

- (a) climate change (b) poverty (c) urbanisation (d) technology

## For You To Do!

- Imagine you lived in a house on this river in Keudah and survived the tsunami (see top image above). Write a diary entry describing the scene two weeks later - include the sights, sounds and smells of the scene - and your feelings.
- Write another diary entry two years later (see bottom image above). Describe the changes that have taken place in your town and life.

# Jargon Busters

**Bushfire:** a forest or grass fire burning out of control.

**Cyclone:** a tropical storm with gale force winds and heavy rainfall. Also known as hurricanes and typhoons in other parts of the world.

**Drought:** a prolonged period of below average rainfall.

**Earthquake:** sudden movement in the Earth's crust.

**Famine:** a severe shortage of food that causes a significant increase in death and disease.

**Flood:** the build-up of large quantities of water, generally caused by heavy rains, which the soil is unable to absorb.

**Infrastructure:** the basic systems and services in a country e.g. roads, schools, hospitals, bridges, communication systems.

**Internally displaced people (IDPs):** people who have been forced to leave their home due to persecution, war or natural disaster without crossing an international border.

**Landslide:** sudden downhill movement of soil and rock.

**Malnutrition:** occurs when people do not have enough food to eat and/or enough variety of foods in order to remain healthy.

**Non-government organisation (NGO):** organisations like World Vision or the Red Cross that provide humanitarian relief and community development programs in low income countries.

**Nuclear accident:** the release of radiation into the environment from a nuclear power plant.

**Oil spill:** the accidental release of oil or petrol into the environment.

**Richter scale:** a scale for measuring the size of an earthquake.

**Tsunami:** a huge sea wave caused by an earthquake.

