



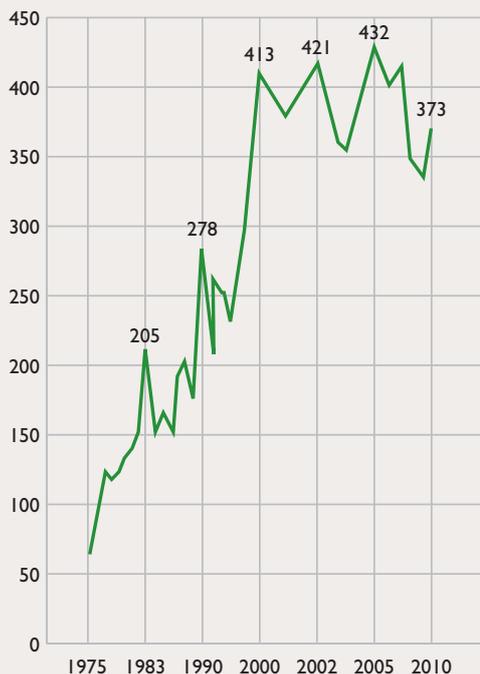
# How natural are disasters?

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

## I. 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:

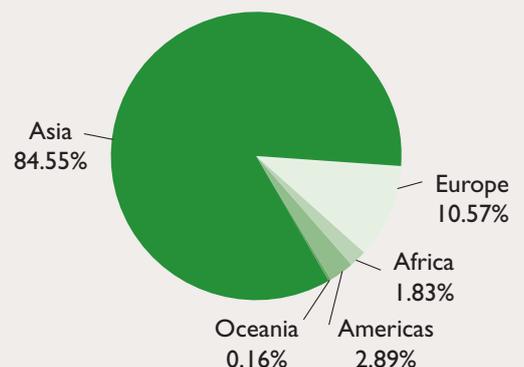
Communities living in \_\_\_\_\_ are most vulnerable to the destruction caused by natural hazards and armed conflict. In poor countries, the death toll from disasters is typically much greater than that in high income \_\_\_\_\_. Because these communities can't afford proper \_\_\_\_\_ materials, their 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?