

Could you be part of an International Rescue?

Every year, natural disasters occur around the world, affecting tens of thousands of people. As the Red Cross says: 'every crisis is personal'. Every day, thousands of earthquakes occur: most so small that they go undetected. The USGS (United States Geological Survey) has an earthquake information centre that identifies around fifty earthquakes each day which are significant enough to locate on its map: <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/map/>

In addition to earthquakes, there are other natural disasters including volcanic eruptions, tropical storms, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes that affect people all over the world.

- Which of these types of natural disasters has affected the most people in the last decade?


$$\text{Risk [R]} = \frac{\text{Hazard [H]} \times \text{Vulnerability [V]}}{\text{Capacity to cope [C]}}$$

In March 2015, Cyclone Pam hit the island of Vanuatu. It quickly became apparent that there was going to be a major aid effort required to assist people. There has been a major impact on a place which was particularly vulnerable to a range of hazards. The level of risk that a particular place (or person) faces can be summed up in the equation.

Each hazard presents certain risks, the vulnerability of people to these risks varies depending on their location and circumstances, and the capacity to cope is influenced by preparation on a global as well as a personal level.

Initial assessments are important for an accurate response to any hazard, and this is where the logistics experts working for aid agencies and charities will start their work, as soon as the news about an event arrives at their headquarters. Their role is vital, as they research the location, and the issues that will face those trying to transport aid to the workers on the ground, and co-ordinate its distribution according to priorities.

One organisation that was involved in the relief programme was Shelterbox: a charity based in Cornwall. After a natural disaster and other

circumstances where people need help, they provide relief to those affected. They are well known for their Shelterboxes, which contain a range of equipment and a tent which supports a family. Schools and other organisations can fund-raise to pay for a box to be dispatched to the disaster area, and it can be tracked using a code. Visit their website for more information: <http://www.shelterbox.org/>

Lesson preparation

Set up your classroom to resemble an 'incident room' with tables for groups of students. There should be access to the following materials as a minimum:

- atlases
- blank world maps
- larger scale maps of an area of your choice (the disaster zone)
- an iPad perhaps for access to the internet, or a range of sites that have been predetermined and to which students' access is restricted.

Print the following downloads:

- [Shelterbox contents](#) (PDF)
- [Blank World map](#) (PDF)
- [Vanuatu map](#) (PDF)

Starter

Download: [Country anagrams sheet](#) (PDF)

Part 1

Hand out the country anagrams sheet as a quick starter. The answers are provided, but you should leave these off the copy handed out to students.

All the countries on the list are places that the charity Shelterbox has helped during 2014-15, for various reasons. One of the countries on the list is Vanuatu.

- How many people had heard of that place?
- Who knows where it is?

Part 2

- Information race – five minutes to build up a picture of this country
– what can you discover in a group?

Download: [Vanuatu Information Race](#) (PDF)

One rule for this: no use of Wikipedia allowed by any group.

Main activity

Groups of students should be sent to their tables if they are not already sat there, where there is a briefing document waiting for them, along with other resources.

An important word here is deployment.

This is the strategic or systematic distribution of people and materials, so that they can be brought into use.

There are many challenges that face communities after a natural disaster has struck, and it is important that the help is directed to those most in need.

Explain that the activity is based on real work done by people in difficult circumstances, and that the Starter they have just done is the sort of work that takes place when a disaster strikes.

The first job is to explore the location that is involved: geography and logistics combining.

Logistics involves the application of a targeted approach to identify priorities for dispatch of support, and co-ordination of people working on the ground. Mapping is an important part of this, as the infrastructure is important to allow aid to reach those in need.

Download:

- [Vanuatu briefing document](#) (doc)

- [Disaster diamond sheet](#) (PDF) – accompanies Vanuatu briefing document
- [Interview with Celine Chhea](#) (PDF)

The briefing document contains the following:

- information on the Vanuatu cyclone (Pam) and websites for further information
- suggestions for the challenges that are faced by those on the ground
- task sheet(s)

NB: If you wish to adapt the disaster to a different location, you can insert additional information.

Feel free to add other resources and artefacts as appropriate too.

You may wish to provide the Interview as it is, or extract relevant sections from it.

Plenary

Collect feedback from each group on the decisions that were made in response to the disaster.

You may wish to do this in the form of a group presentation, which can then be assessed. You may also want to provide some guidance on the format /length/timing of that presentation.

Use the [Presentation Assessment Sheet](#) (doc) if required to assess each group's presentation.

Further reading and resources

Risk report – insurance companies such as Munich Re produces an annual assessment of risks and hazards which are well worth reading: <http://www.dw.de/munich-re-reviews-2014-natural-disasters/a-18174413>

Shelterbox: <http://www.shelterbox.org>

Map Feeds:

1. [Map Action](#)

A charity which helps create new maps of areas which have been affected by natural disasters, especially where existing maps haven't been updated there for some time, and the lack of accurate mapping is affecting the work of people in the area.

2. [Humanitarian Open Street Map Team](#)

After a disaster in an area that has not previously been mapped, there are often efforts to add detailed mapping of the area to Open Street Map. This involves volunteers tracing mapping.

Plenty of images: <https://www.flickr.com/search/?q=cyclone%20pam>

Postscript

As this resource was being written, a huge earthquake occurred in the area of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. The Gorkha quake, as it is called, resulted in major devastation to historic buildings, and rendered hundreds of thousands of homes uninhabitable. Infrastructure has been disrupted, and there will be years of rebuilding ahead.

[You can see a very useful video describing the context of the quake, presented by Professor Iain Stewart here.](#)

It is a reminder that geography, like logistics, is constantly responding to changing circumstances, and that any case study is subject to change too.

Jeff Stanfield, formerly geography advisor for Hampshire introduced the phrase 'floating topicality' to many teachers. This is the notion that space should be left in the curriculum for tackling major events that might happen during the course of the year.

You are very welcome to amend this resource to take account of a different natural disaster which might occur during the teaching these activities.

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