



Oasis International School Model United Nations

General Assembly

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Guiding Package

Topic (2): Humanitarian Disaster Relief Assistance

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I. **Abstract:**

Humans are social beings that are in constant need for each other. People cannot survive without others which is why it is the duty of every person to help and aid those surrounding him. In a world where hunger reigns, murder widespread, and children doing hard labor; it is the obligation and responsibility of the international committee, guided by the United Nations, to retrieve what is left of humanity and share it with others. It is their duty to find ways for people to be aware of the disasters striking countries everywhere and to send out help. On August 2009, the Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon stated:

Today, we recognize the millions of people who count on us for their very survival. The one billion people afflicted by hunger. The tens of millions forced to flee their homes because of disaster and conflict. The children who die from diseases we know how to cure. The women and girls who are brutalized by sexual violence. We need to tackle these problems at their root. But until we do, lives will hang in the balance. And the humanitarian community will be on the scene, rushing bravely towards danger, determined to help people in need.¹

¹ Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: *Remarks to launch the first World Humanitarian Day*. UN Headquarters, 19 August 2009

II. Introduction:

No country is immune to disasters; whether they be manmade such as wars and conflicts or natural disasters such as typhoons, volcano eruptions, floods, etc. Listed as one of the purposes of the United Nations in its charter is the achievement of “*international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character*”². It is evident that in the face of grave calamities, all member nations are expected to aid each other in any way possible. More specifically, disasters exceeding the resolution capacity of a nation require other nations’ aid. However, a dilemma emerges in this situation as all nations are obligated to respect others’ sovereignty and their right to administer over themselves.

Thus, over the years, the UN and other establishments all over the world have formed organizations dedicated to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) in order to help resolve the imposing dilemma. Nevertheless, in recent years, the number of refugees from conflicted areas has risen drastically and consequently, many countries deny their admittance. By doing so, they are depriving these people of aid and assistance. Moreover, lack of coordination between and within organizations as well as lack of preparation and awareness of disasters in countries contribute to the deficiency of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

III. Key terms:

1. **Humanitarian:** promoting human wellbeing, helping out in situation in which there is human suffering.
2. **Relief:** reassurance and in times of need or difficulty in any domain.
3. **Assistance:** [synonym: relief], helping by sharing work load.

²Anonymous, UN, available on: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml> consulted the 1st of September 2015.

4. **Population displacement:** people being obligated to move from where they live, in most cases it is due to wars or conflicts. “*Forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities.*”³
5. **Emergency (or disaster) response:** the immediate decisions and measures taken in cases of any type of emergency (fire, medical, natural, etc...).
6. **Case based reasoning:** finding solutions to new problems through the experience of previously solved resembling problems (antonym: rule based systems).
7. **Knowledge management:** systematic, intelligent and correct handling of available knowledge of the situation in order to find out the requirements. This allows quick resolution to the situation and paves the way for a better long-term solution.
8. **Disaster/conflict preparedness:** actions taken on the expectedness of a natural or manmade disaster in order to secure an effective response to the situation. It is also the capacity of a government to respond to potential disasters.
9. **Operational environment:** conditions and circumstances that define the situation and pave the way for decisions on the actions to be taken. There are different types; permissive, hostile, uncertain...
10. **Sovereignty:** is the supreme or authority that a state has in order to govern itself (it involves: making, executing, and applying laws; making war and peace; imposing and collecting taxes; and engaging in relations with foreign nations).

For more useful terminology and their definitions visit:
<http://www.who.int/hac/about/definitions/en/>

IV. **Background information:**

Brief history:

The first ever UN peacekeeping mission was in regards to the conflict in 1948 between the newly independent country, Israel and the Arab States. Ever since then, the UN has manifested a strong will to fix problems in order to avoid manmade disasters. However, they are faced with another issue which is natural disasters.

³ Anonymous, *UNESCO* available on : <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/> consulted the 1st of September 2015.

Main values of disaster relief:

In order to insure the protection of people during manmade or natural disasters, the UN as well as the international community aim to maintain neutrality, impartiality, independence, respect of sovereignty and most importantly, humanity. Basically, neutrality and impartiality mean that no discrimination towards the victims or civilians will be tolerated. Any humanitarian aid should be inclusive of everyone regardless and independent of their ages, sex, race, political view or belief. Moreover, aid can only be provided when the impacted country allows it without anyone trespassing or forcefully entering. Obviously, the most vital value is humanity which encircles the rest of the values.

Issues raised by HA/DR operations:

Firstly, the main problem with HA/DR operations is the respect of a country's sovereignty. Some may see other nations as threats or accuse them of being hostile. Secondly, standing in way of providing humanitarian aid, due to some nations' foreign policies for example, is an act that has not been sanctioned by the UN. The level of contribution to HA/DR operations may also vary depending on a country's economic capability. Furthermore, organizations are mainly funded by donations which makes them less competent than what is needed. These organizations cannot be blamed for the insufficiency of these operations since governments also do not have preliminary measures prepared in the face of any disaster.

Foreign Disaster Relief

Humanitarian Services

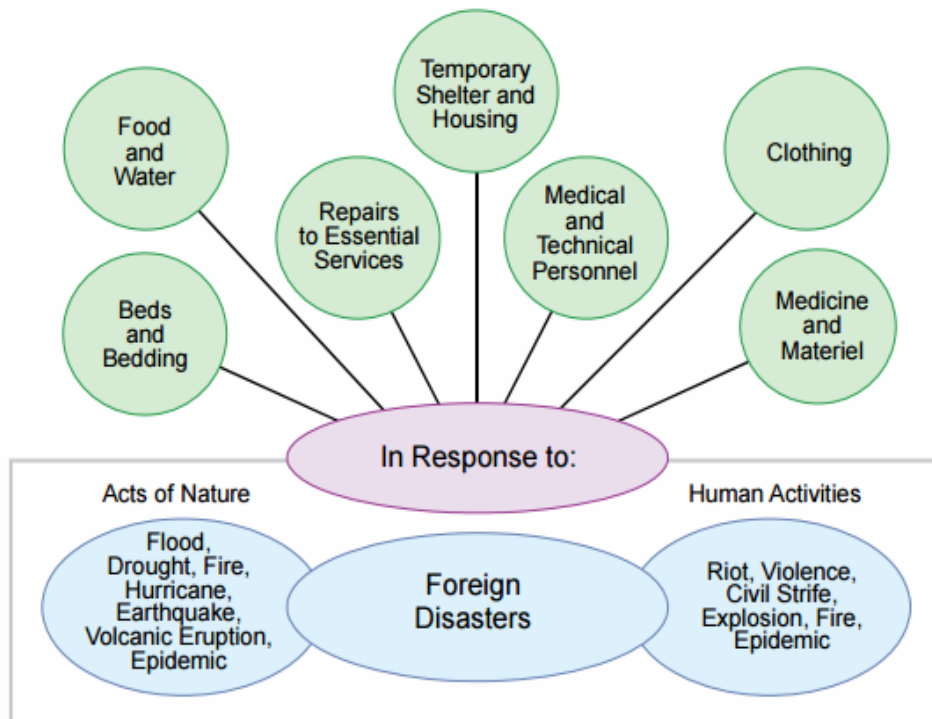


Figure I-1. Foreign Disaster Relief

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[Figure illustrating the nature of the disasters as well as the essentials for their solution however, responses are not limited to those mentioned in this diagram]

V. Major Countries:

Actively contributing in humanitarian aid:

Federal Republic of Germany: is one of the many countries in the European Union (EU) welcoming refugees and offering those supplies and shelter. It receives the largest number of asylum applications as it is one of the few countries nowadays that are still abiding by the international obligation to help others. Following it in that number is France, Sweden and Italy.

The Italian Republic: also a part of the EU, this country received 87 000 people by sea in 2014. To aid these refugees, in 2013 it had launched the Mare

⁴ GOLDFEIN, David; *dtic* available on: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_29.pdf consulted the 1st of September 2015.

Nostrum operation to lessen their risks and ensure their survival. This operation alone, held in October, saved more than 100 000 people.

The Albanian Republic: had an important incident that left it as a great example for a country offering humanitarian aid without hesitation. In 2013, with the support of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the country ensured the safe arrival of more than 240 refugees from Iraq and continues to work on durable solutions for them.

Susceptible to disasters:

Many African countries have had a history of natural disasters and issues. Notably the drought that was menacing potential mass starvation (for over 20 million people) in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, southern Sudan, and Zaire in 1994. This issue reappeared once more in 1973 in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

Japan: is one of the world's most disaster prone countries. It has seen many earthquakes and has developed complex systems to avoid and handle with them. Most recently, there was an 8.5 magnitude earthquake that was felt throughout the entire country. Thankfully no major injuries were recorded but similar incidences before have caused more than a few deaths.

The Philippines: similarly to Japan, this country is extremely prone to earthquakes, cyclones and volcanic eruptions as it fosters around 23 active volcanoes amongst a total of 300. Yearly, on average there are 20 tropical typhoons.

China: another Asian country which is mostly notable for its high risk of floods.

Find out more about these, and so many other important countries on: <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/country-profiles>

In current need of aid because of manmade conflicts:

Afghanistan: currently, in Afghanistan, young men are brainwashed to terrorize civilians, territories are being destroyed and no sign of peace is shown

nearby. This conflict has been ongoing since 2001 and has been a major contributor to the outburst of refugees all over the world.

Iraq: only three years after the end of a war, in 2014, Iraq was quickly thrown into another. They currently face the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” in a civil war that has extended its horizon to neighboring countries such as Syria that has been in ongoing turmoil since the Arab Spring in 2011.

Major organizations involved:

The office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): through the resolution passed in the General Assembly in 1991, the UN admitted to the need of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian responses that were, until that moment, all improvised. And so, an emergency relief coordinator was appointed and the OCHA became the facilitator of the UN’s HA/DR efforts. It also delivers information on emergencies worldwide and helps organize the financing of certain situations.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created to help displaced Europeans after World War II (WWII) and continues to try to resolve refugee problems. In 2015, its major priority will be the protection of asylum areas. The *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* also focuses on protecting displaced populations by providing them with set up camps and facilities for their accommodation.

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO): established in 1971 by the GA. It is part of the *Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA)* which has its own Emergency Relief Coordinator. The DHA includes the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)* which is crucial as it assembles all major humanitarian agencies in order to develop policies and divide responsibilities, it also includes the *UN Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF)* as a quick and effective source of emergency funding through stocks of year-round voluntary contributions. Taking part under the DHA is the *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals Process (CAP)*, which calculates the needs of a situation and prepares a wide-ranging interagency response plan.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC): founded in 1919, it was and still remains one of the most notable relief operations organizations. It is known for its respect for just and completely humanitarian assistance as it is not tolerant of any discrimination against the victims (values passed on by its founder: Henry Dunant).

European Commission and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO): is the practical and technical European Union agency which acts upon the international obligation to help those in need.

Additional research should also be done on these secondary organizations, who also contribute to the issue of HA/DR: *The Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB)*; *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)*; *the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)* and *the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative (CMSI)*.

VI. **UN Involvement:**

The UN's involvement has mainly been through its creation of organizations (cited above) that observe, evaluate and act upon emergencies of various natures.

Two key resolutions have been passed by the General Assembly regarding HA/DR: Resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 on '*Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance*' as well as resolution 46/182 of December 1991 on '*Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations*'.

VII. **Possible Solutions:**

This topic has many aspects to it, which makes it more difficult to result to one unique solution. One of the possibilities to make the situation better is to better prepare countries who are prone to natural disasters as well as make people aware in every country of the dangers they might be facing and how they can help prevent them as well as help if they happen. Nations should encourage each other to be more open to humanitarian help as it is a basic human right. Sanctions should be made if a country rejects aid without viable reason.

VIII. **Guiding Questions:**

1. What is your country's position on refugees?
2. In recent years, has your country contributed to the aid of others? How?
3. Should countries be allowed to ignore sovereignty in order to aid in times of human rights violations?
4. How can a country's sovereignty be respected while receiving an HA/DR operation?
5. To which disasters is your country prone to?
6. How can there be an instant and effective collaboration and cooperation between organizations and governments during times of emergencies?
7. What contribution can your country currently offer to HA/DR operations?
8. How can the respect of the values of HA/DR operations worldwide be insured?
9. Which is more important and why, knowledge management or disaster preparedness?

IX. **Useful links:**

<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/humanitarian/>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19378667>

<https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/statement/2012/12-13-united-nations-humanitarian-coordination.htm>

<http://www.disasterready.org/partners>

https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/HO_AidWorkerSectyPreview_V1.pdf

http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_29.pdf

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/Social-and-Humanitarian-Assistance-INTERNATIONAL-DISASTER-RELIEF.html#ixzz3kg3fHugC>

<http://www.worldvision.org/our-impact/disaster-relief#sthash.hnaZUizG.dpuf>

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1010074210709#page-2>

<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/defining-humanitarian-aid>

<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination/preparedness/overview>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e5f6.html>

<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/germany>

<http://www.english-online.at/government/peacekeeping/peacekeeping.and-other-missions.htm>

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- Anonymous, UN, available on: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml> consulted the 1st of September 2015.
- Anonymous, *UNESCO* available on : <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/> consulted the 1st of September 2015.
- Anonymous, *UN Refugee Agency*, available on <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e5f6.html> consulted the 1st of September 2015.
- GOLDFEIN, David; *dtic* available on: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_29.pdf consulted the 1st of September 2015.
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